Department of Social Research
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SAVE THE NATION!

A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF POLITICAL BLOGS AS A MEDIUM FOR NATIONALIST COMMUNICATION AND PERSUASION

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral dissertation explores how populist radical right politicians in Finland and Sweden use political blogs for the purpose of nationalist political communication and persuasion. The study builds upon research that has highlighted the growing importance of social media in the transmission of radical right, nationalist and anti-immigration political discourse, and to the central role of these media in the gradual normalisation of such discourse. Moreover, the study acknowledges the potential – indicated by previous research – of political blogs to function as tools for voter persuasion and mobilisation. The study aims to contribute with insights on how social psychological dynamics such as self-presentation, identity-constructions, discursive divisions between 'ingroups' and 'outgroups', strategies of persuasion, and appeals to emotions and nostalgic memories are involved in these processes.

The dissertation examines blog-entries by members of the populist radical right parties the Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*) in Finland and the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*) in Sweden during 2007-2015. The bloggers who are the focus of the study represent, first, the parties' extreme anti-immigration factions, comprised first and foremost of white men (Studies I and IV); second, the parties' women's leagues (Study II); and third, politicians with immigrant or other ethnic minority background who have chosen to join a populist radical right party (Study III). The critical discursive and rhetorical psychological study explores the nationalist political blog discourse at three levels: it investigates the arguments it contains; by what verbal, visual and digital means these arguments are presented in order to seem convincing; and what implications these formulations might have in a social and political sense. In so doing, the study approaches the political blog-discourse as part and parcel of its broader argumentative context.

This dissertation contributes to social psychological research on nationalist political communication and persuasion in three central ways. First, by delving into the discourse of both white men, women and ethnic minority members in populist radical right parties, it provides an understanding of the diversity of voices within such parties. Women and immigrants within these parties seem to be faced with particular dilemmas: the former ones with that between societal norms of gender equality and the patriarchal politics of the populist radical right; and the latter ones with that of being an immigrant in an anti-immigration political party. The critical discursive and rhetorical analyses of this study are able to show how these politicians strive to reconcile such dilemmas in their blog-discourse in ways that nevertheless remain faithful to the promotion of patriarchal and nationalist political causes.

Second, this dissertation extends the critical discursive and rhetorical approach with analytical tools from narrative psychology, social semiotic

studies of images and studies of online political communication. Thus moving 'beyond the text' in its analytical approach, the study is able to explore the multitude of (audio-)visual, digital and communicative features contained in political blogs, and how these interact with 'classical' rhetorical strategies, narrative structures, and socially and culturally rooted discursive resources in the construction of nationalist political arguments.

Third, the study shows that the (audio-)visual, digital and communicative features of the blogs allow for the presentation of socially sensitive and even racist political views without the individual blogger having to express an explicit personal opinion on the matter at hand. Because of these features political blogs seem to constitute an optimal sphere for nationalist political communication and persuasion: they enable the conveying of powerful, credible and emotion-provoking messages, yet they concomitantly protect the blogger from charges of holding racist views.

Discourse contained in political blogs does not remain in the blogosphere, but becomes circulated in mainstream media and thus influences the broader societal and political debate. In order to grasp the character and societal implications of contemporary political communication and persuasion, this dissertation thus encourages social psychological research to develop its tools for critically studying discourse contained in political blogs.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tässä väitöskirjassa tarkastellaan suomalaisten ja ruotsalaisten oikeistopopulististen poliitikoiden kansallismielisiä ja äänestäjien suostutteluun pyrkiviä poliittisia blogikirjoituksia. Väitöskirjan lähtökohtana on aiempi tutkimus, jonka mukaan sosiaalinen media – blogit mukaan lukien – ovat yhä tärkeämpi väline äärioikeistolaisen, kansallismielisen ja muukalaisvastaisen poliittisen diskurssin levittämiselle ja tällaisen puheen vähittäiselle yhteiskunnalliselle normalisoitumiselle.

Tutkimus lähestyy poliittisia blogeja äänestäjien suostuttelun ja mobilisoinnin välineinä. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on valottaa sosiaalipsykologisten ilmiöiden – kuten identiteettikategorioiden rakentumista ja käyttöä, sisä-ulkoryhmäjakoja, ja jaettuihin käsityksiin, tunteisiin ja nostalgisiin muistoihin pohjaavia suostuttelukeinoja – osaa äänestäjien suostuttelussa ja mobilisoinnissa. Tutkimuksessa analysoidaan Perussuomalaisten ja Ruotsidemokraattien jäsenten blogikirjoituksia ajanjaksolla 2007-2015. Tutkimuksen keskiössä olevat poliitikot edustavat puolueiden muukalaisvastaisia siipiä (Osatutkimus I ja IV), naisjärjestöjä (Osatutkimus II) ja Ruotsidemokraattien maahanmuuttotaustaisia tai etniseen vähemmistöön kuuluvia poliitikkoja (Osatutkimus III).

Kriittisen diskursiivisen ja retorisen psykologian lähestymistapoja hyödyntäen tutkimus lähestyy poliittista diskurssia osana sen argumentatiivista ympäristöä. Näin ollen tutkimus tarkastelee kansallismielistä poliittista blogidiskurssia kolmella tasolla: sisällön (1), retorisen – sekä verbaalisen, digitaalisen, visuaalisen että viestinnällisen – muodon (2), sekä mahdollisten sosiaalisten ja poliittisten seuraamusten (3) tasoilla.

Tutkimus edistää kansallismielisen poliittisen viestinnän ja suostuttelun sosiaalipsykologista tutkimusta kolmella tavalla. Ensinnäkin, se valottaa kansallismielisten puolueiden äänten monimuotoisuutta tarkastelemalla ”valkoisten” miesten lisäksi oikeistopopulistisiin puolueisiin kuuluvien naisten ja maahanmuuttajien sekä etniseen vähemmistöön kuuluvien poliitikkojen diskurssia. Erityisesti naisten ja maahanmuuttajien tai etnisten vähemmistöjen edustajien voi ajatella olevan dilemmaattisessa suhteessa oikeistopopulistiseen puolueeseensa nähden: naiset joutuvat tasapainottelemaan toisaalta yhteiskunnallisten tasa-arvonormien ja toisaalta puolueensa patriarkaalisen politiikan välillä; maahanmuuttajat ja etniset vähemmistöjäsenet taas joutuvat suhteuttamaan etnisen ja poliittisen identiteettinsä toisiinsa. Väitöstutkimus ilmentää niitä tapoja, joilla naispoliitikot sekä maahanmuuttotaustaiset tai etniseen vähemmistöön kuuluvat poliitikot pyrkivät ratkaisemaan näitä dilemmoja blogidiskurseissaan tavalla, joka kuitenkin ajaa patriarkaalisen ja kansallismielisen politiikan asiaa.

Toiseksi, tutkimus laajentaa kriittisen diskursiivisen sekä retorisen psykologian lähestymistapaa narratiivisen psykologian, visuaalisen sosiaalisen semiotiikan sekä poliittisen verkkoviestinnän tutkimuksen työkaluilla. Väitöstutkimuksessa tarkastellaan myös "tekstin" ulkopuolisia elementtejä eli sitä, miten (audio-)visuaaliset, digitaaliset ja kommunikatiiviset elementit yhdessä klassisten retoristen strategioiden, narratiivisten rakenteiden ja sosiaalisesti ja kulttuurisesti jaettujen resurssien kanssa osallistuvat blogien sisältämän monikerroksisen kansallismielisen diskurssin tuottamiseen.

Kolmanneksi, tutkimus osoittaa, että blogien (audio)visuaaliset, digitaaliset ja kommunikatiiviset ominaisuudet mahdollistavat sosiaalisesti arkaluontoisten ja jopa rasististen (poliittisten) näkemysten ilmaisun – ilman, että poliitikon tarvitsee itse kertoa omaa henkilökohtaista kantaansa kyseiseen aiheeseen. Näiden ominaisuuksien ansiosta poliittiset blogit muodostavat ihanteellisen ympäristön kansallismieliselle poliittiselle viestinnälle ja suostuttelulle: ne mahdollistavat voimakkaiden, uskottavien ja tunteisiin vetoavien viestien välittämisen, mutta samalla kuitenkin suojelevat bloggaajaa rasismisyytöksistä.

Blogien sisältämä kansallismielinen poliittinen diskurssi ei jää blogeihin, vaan sitä kierrätetään valtamediassa ja näin ollen se vaikuttaa laajempaan yhteiskunnalliseen ja poliittiseen keskusteluun. Jotta voisimme asianmukaisesti tutkia nykyistä kansallismielistä poliittista kommunikaatiota ja suostuttelua, ja niiden yhteiskunnallisia seurauksia, kannustaa tämä väitöstutkimus sosiaalipsykologian tieteenalaa kehittämään välineitä blogien poliittisen diskurssin kriittiseen analyysiin.

ABSTRAKT

I denna doktorsavhandling undersöks hur högerpopulistiska politiker i Finland och Sverige använder politiska bloggar för att nå ut till potentiella väljare med nationalistiska budskap. Avhandlingen bygger på tidigare forskning som påvisat sociala mediers betydelse för spridningen och den gradvisa normaliseringen av högerextremistisk, nationalistisk och invandringsfientlig politisk diskurs, samt bloggars funktion som verktyg för övertalning och mobilisering av väljare. Avhandlingen söker bidra med insikter om hur socialpsykologiska fenomen såsom identitetskonstruktioner och deras användning, uppdelningar i in- och utgrupper, samt övertalningsstrategier som vädjar till känslor, nostalgiska minnen och ”sunt förnuft” är inbegripna i övertalningen och mobiliseringen av väljare.

I avhandlingen undersöks Sannfinländarnas och Sverigedemokraternas medlemmars bloggtexter mellan åren 2007 och 2015. Politikerna vars diskurs undersöks tillhör, för det första, medlemmar av respektive partiers invandringsfientliga falanger (Studier I och IV); för det andra, partiernas kvinnoförbund (Studie II); och för det tredje, Sverigedemokrater som har invandrarbakgrund eller tillhör en etnisk minoritet (Studie III). Dessa olika politikers bloggdiskurs undersöks ur ett kritiskt diskursivt och retoriskt psykologiskt perspektiv, vilket betyder att forskningen tar i beaktande det bredare argumentativa sammanhang i vilket bloggtexterna ingår. Utifrån detta perspektiv undersöks bloggdiskursen på tre nivåer: på en innehållsmässig nivå, på en retorisk nivå – där såväl verbala, (audio-)visuella, digitala som kommunikativa element beaktas – och slutligen på en samhällelig nivå, i syfte att beakta bloggdiskursens potentiella sociala och politiska följder.

Avhandlingen bidrar till socialpsykologisk forskning i nationalistisk politisk kommunikation på tre centrala sätt. För det första, genom att utforska såväl vita mäns, kvinnors som invandrares och etniska minoritetsmedlemmars högerpopulistiska och nationalistiska diskurs belyser avhandlingen den mångfald av röster som finns inom högerpopulistiska partier. Kvinnor och invandrare kan anses befinna sig i en särskilt problematisk situation inom dessa partier: kvinnorna tvingas balansera mellan samhälleliga jämställdhetsnormer å ena sidan och sitt partis patriarkala ideologi å den andra, medan invandrare eller etniska minoritetsmedlemmar måste förena denna personliga bakgrund med sin invandringsfientliga politiska tillhörighet. Avhandlingen belyser de sätt på vilka dessa politiker i sina bloggtexter strävar efter att lösa sådana dilemman utan att svika sitt partis patriarkala och nationalistiska politiska agenda.

För det andra utvidgar avhandlingen det kritiska diskursiva och retoriska psykologiska perspektivet den tillämpar med verktyg från narrativ psykologi, visuell social semiotik samt forskning i internetbaserad politisk kommunikation. Därmed fokuserar forskningen inte enbart på det skrivna

ordet, utan tar även i beaktande de (audio-)visuella, digitala och kommunikativa element som i bloggarna samverkar med klassiska retoriska strategier, narrativa strukturer samt socialt och kulturellt förankrade diskursiva resurser i konstruktionen av nationalistiska politiska argument.

För det tredje påvisar studien att bloggarnas (audio-)visuella, digitala och kommunikativa funktioner gör det möjligt för bloggaren att presentera socialt känsliga och till och med rasistiska politiska budskap utan att hen själv tvingas ta explicit ställning till ämnet i fråga. Genom dessa funktioner utgör bloggar en optimal plattform för nationalistisk politisk kommunikation: de möjliggör förmedlingen av slagkraftiga och trovärdiga politiska argument som vädjar till läsarnas känslor, medan de samtidigt beskyddar politikern från beskyllningar för rasism.

Nationalistisk diskurs i politiska bloggar förblir inte i bloggosfären, utan når även traditionella medier och påverkar sålunda den allmänna samhälleliga och politiska debatten. I syfte att vi bättre ska kunna förstå uttrycksformerna och de samhälleliga följderna av samtida nationalistisk politisk kommunikation uppmanar denna avhandling därmed socialpsykologisk forskning att utveckla sina verktyg för att kritiskt studera politisk bloggdiskurs.

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Helsinki, April 2017

CONTENTS

LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This dissertation is based on the following publications:

I. Sakki, I. & Pettersson, K. (2016). Discursive Constructions of Otherness in Populist Radical Right Political Blogs. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 46(2), 156–170.

II. Pettersson, K. (2017). Ideological dilemmas of female populist radical right politicians. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 24(1), 7–22.

III. Pettersson. K., Liebkind, K., & Sakki, I. (2016). 'You who are an immigrant, why are you in the Sweden Democrats? *Discourse & Society,* 27(6), 624–641.

IV. Pettersson, K., & Sakki, I. (2017). 'Pray for the fatherland!' Discursive and digital strategies at play in nationalist political blogging. *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* advance online publication February 2nd.

The publications are referred to in the text by their roman numerals.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BNP	The British National Party
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CDP	Critical Discursive Psychology
DPP	The Danish People's Party (Dan: *Dansk Folkeparti*)
EU	The European Union
FN	The National Front (Fr: *Front National*)
FP	The Finns Party (Fin: *Perussuomalaiset*)
PP	The Norwegian Progress Party (Nor: *Fremskrittspartiet*)
SD	The Sweden Democrats (Swe: *Sverigedemokraterna*)

1 INTRODUCTION

On September 10th 2016 the Neo-Nazi organisation the Finnish Defence League (*Suomen vastarintaliike*) holds a demonstration at the railway square in the centre of the Finnish capital. A young man who passes by the demonstration stops and spits on the ground in disgust. One of the demonstrators reacts by attacking the by-passer, who is badly wounded and sent to hospital. One week later the man dies of his wounds.

Despite the fact that this was not the first instance during recent times of extremist violence on behalf of the Finnish Defence League and other extremist groups (Pullinen, 2016), and notwithstanding subsequent demands from the public and the political opposition alike to take measures against organised racist, violent and extremist movements, it took more than one week for the Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä to comment on the situation (Sipilä, 2016). In a blog-entry, Sipilä finally denounced racism and violence and concluded that the laws regulating racist organisations and hate-speech are amendable. He did not, however, refer to the Finnish Defence League per se, or to neo-Nazis at all, but rather, he talked about the 'incidence at the Railway Square'. In the same sentence he mentioned the so-called 'Otanmäki-case', where two asylum-seekers had been suspected of robbery and homicide. The Prime Minister continued his statement by discussing the topic of immigration, and the ways in which all Finns can participate in aiding the integration of migrants and refugees in Finland.

On the same day as Sipilä wrote his entry, his colleague in the conservative government-coalition, Foreign Minister and leader of the populist radical right Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*) Timo Soini (2016), also commented on the killing in his blog:

> *Innocence does no harm. Violence is wrong, also the threat thereof. For me the human life is sacred from womb to grave. The events in Otanmäki and Helsinki during the last days are unequivocally wrong. This is the Finns Party's opinion and mine.*
>
> Timo Soini: blog-entry, September 19th, 2016.

What can be concluded about these blog-statements that were widely quoted within mainstream news in Finland? First, obviously, that they condemn violence. Yet, one may ask why both Sipilä and Soini turned the discussion to concern broader questions of immigration and integration of asylum seekers and refugees, and why neither politician focused solely on the issue of what needs to be done in order to counter the violence of Neo-Nazi movements. It may be tempting to wonder if this had anything to do with the Finns Party's members' connections with such movements (Hiiro, 2016).

Many more critical questions could be raised about what is said and what is being left unsaid in these political blog-entries. Such questions do, in any case, reveal something about the topic of interest in this study: messages contained in political blogs can be complex and subtle, and contain meanings of broader social and political significance.

The aforementioned tragic case and the politicians' slow and weak reactions to it illustrate a development that has taken place not only in the small country of Finland, but indeed across Europe: that of societal tensions, radicalisation and violence, and the ruling politicians' shortcomings in counteracting these problems. The beginning of the 21st century has certainly in many ways been a turbulent time for Europe. Europe has experienced a financial crisis; it has been shocked by the decision of the United Kingdom to (br)exit the European Union; it has been the target of brutal terrorism, it has received more than one million asylum seekers, migrants and refugees during what has been termed the largest global refugee crisis since the Second World War; and it has witnessed a new dawn for political parties with populist, nationalist, anti-immigration and anti-EU agendas.

The 'refugee crisis' of 2015, which the Finnish Prime Minister implicitly referred to in his blog one year later, caused turmoil in Europe, with conflicting views over the individual member-states' responsibilities in receiving the refugees and asylum seekers from the war-laden countries of Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Both across and within national borders people were divided into camps of those who wished either to open or close these borders to the migrants. The concomitant societal polarisation and the failure of the ruling politicians to find a solution to the situation provided an opportunity for radical right parties across Europe to increase their support (Gutteridge, 2015) by appealing to the voters with promises of protecting the nation and its people against the threats of uncontrolled mass-immigration and terrorism. This development took place also in the Nordic countries of Finland and Sweden, who witnessed the sudden arrival of asylum seekers whose number radically exceeded those of previous years. In times of strong norms against blatant expressions of racism and prejudice (Billig, 1988b, p. 94), however, politicians who wished to depict 'outsiders', that is, asylum-seekers, immigrants and ethnic and cultural minorities as 'the problem', were forced to seek new ways of expressing such views in socially appropriate ways.

This doctoral dissertation explores how populist radical right politicians of the Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset,* FP) in Finland and the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna,* SD) in Sweden express nationalist arguments in their political blogs. The study draws inspiration from research that has pointed to the growing importance of social media in the transmission and gradual normalisation of radical right, nationalist and anti-immigration political discourse (e.g., Allen, 2011; Bratten, 2005; Lentin & Titley, 2011), and to the specific potential of political blogs to function as tools for voter engagement and mobilisation (Baumer, Sueyoshi & Tomlinson, 2011; Nilsson & Carlsson, 2014). This pertains in particular to the context of this study – the Nordic

countries of Finland and Sweden, where the use of social media is significant in global comparison (Carlson, Djupsund & Strandberg, 2014), and where such media have been pivotal for the rise of the radical right in the 21st century (Hatakka, 2016; Horsti, 2015; Keskinen, 2013; Mäkinen, 2016). My present interest lies in how political blogs may function as a particularly important sphere for the construction and transmission of populist radical right and nationalist political messages. A comparison between the two countries allows me, moreover, to explore the social and historical situatedness of populist radical right political discourse. I will approach this topic from the critical discursive and rhetorical psychological perspectives developed within the field of social psychology. Through these perspectives I am able to explore what themes the discourse contains, how these themes are discussed, and what implications these formulations might have in a social and political sense.

With this study I wish to contribute to previous social psychological research on radical right and nationalist political discourse in three central ways. First, in studying discourse contained in political blogs, I strive to increase the variety of material that we use for advancing our knowledge of social psychological phenomena, in this case, political communication and persuasion. Second, by delving into the discourse of women and other ethnic minority members who have chosen to join a populist radical right party, I seek to gain a deeper understanding of radical right discourse other than that of white men, whom previous research has predominantly focused on. Third, in moving 'beyond the text' in my analytical approach, I acknowledge the multitude of digital, (audio-)visual and communicative features that interact with the text in constructing and adding to the persuasive power of arguments contained in political blogs. In so doing, I aim to contribute to social psychological research into political communication and persuasion in contemporary societies.

This doctoral dissertation is comprised of four separate studies and the present summary that sets out the theoretical and empirical background and aims of the research, presents its methods and material, and reflects upon its implications. The dissertation is structured as follows. In chapter 2 I describe the context of the empirical material, namely, the countries of Finland and Sweden, and present the two populist radical right parties whose discourse I investigate. In chapter 3 I discuss the theoretical background and previous empirical research on the topics this study addresses. This chapter is comprised of social psychological – mainly critical discursive and rhetorical psychological – research on populist and radical right political discourse; feminist research on nationalism; social psychological and discursive research on ethnic identity; as well as research into online political communication. Here I also explicate how the present study situates itself within and between these streams of research, and how it seeks to contribute to social psychological and discursive research on political communication and persuasion. In chapter 4 I present the materials and methods used in the sub-studies, and in chapter 5 I bring together the main findings of these studies.

Finally, in chapter 6, I reflect upon the contributions, limitations, ethical concerns and implications of my research.

2 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY: FINLAND AND SWEDEN

In this chapter I will introduce the context of this study – that of Finland and Sweden. Before delving into the social, political and historical peculiarities of this context, especially those relevant for understanding the rise and nature of the populist radical right therein, I begin with a few remarks on a disputed concept.

2.1 A SHORT NOTE ON POPULISM

This is not a study about populism. Nevertheless, I use the term 'populist radical right' throughout this dissertation. In order not to overlook the vast research area of populism studies; therefore, some conceptual clarifications are in order. What is meant by 'populist'? And what is meant by 'populist radical right'?

There are probably as many definitions of populism as there are scholars thereof. During the past decades the debate among political scientists about how to define populism has been intense. Disagreement persists about whether it should be regarded as an ideology, as a discourse, as a style, as a strategy, or as a combination of or perhaps neither of these (see e.g., Aslanidis, 2016, for a comprehensive overview of this debate). A well-known definition of populism was formulated by Cas Mudde in 2004. According to Mudde, populism is an ideology that is inherently 'thin' as its aims are limited in scope, complexity and ambition, in contrast to other political ideologies of a more 'full' character. Mudde defines populism as 'an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite", and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale of the people' (p. 543). Other theoreticians of populism, including the influential post-structuralist Ernesto Laclau (1977; 2005a; 2005b), view populism as a discourse, where emphasis is on articulations that position the underdog ('us, the people') against the powerful ('them, the elite'). Similarly, Margaret Canovan (1999, p. 3) conceptualises populism as an 'appeal to "the people" against both the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values in society'.

The connotation of the label 'populist radical right' is perhaps less contested, yet its relation to terms such as 'right-wing populism' (e.g., Mouffe, 2005), 'extreme right-wing populism' (e.g., Rydgren, 2005), 'far right' (e.g. Ellinas, 2010), extreme right (e.g., Carter, 2005), and 'nationalist populist' (e.g., Hellström, 2016) remains somewhat unclear. Scholars tend to agree that populist radical right parties take an authoritarian stance on socio-cultural issues (e.g., Kitschelt & McGann 1995; Mudde 2007; Rydgren 2005). This

position includes promoting strict criminal laws and a strong military, being sceptical towards gender equality and the rights of sexual minorities, arguing for the maintenance of traditional family values, and viewing the nation as an ethnically and culturally homogeneous entity that needs to be protected from multiculturalism and immigration (Jungar & Jupskås, 2014). The question of whether populist radical right parties can adequately be placed on the socio-economic scale is, however, a much more complex issue, and views differ over the extent to which these parties place importance on socio-economic matters at all (see Jungar & Jupskås, 2014, on this issue). I will return to how the FP and the SD position themselves with regards to these questions in the following section.

With these conceptual considerations in mind, and with the risk of repeating myself, as populism is not my main focus it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to delve deeper into the debate on its nature. Rather, the aim of this research project is to explore how articulations of exclusionary nationalist and anti-feminist political stances are conveyed through political blogging in 21st century Finland and Sweden. These articulations are put forth by members of the FP and SD, who during this time have been able to dictate the debate on how and against whom the borders of their respective nations should be defined. These parties have indeed been attached with the label 'populist radical right'. However, I adhere to the emphasis by Laclau and followers on the *form* of populism, that is, on populism as something that is *done* rather than something that a political actor is or is not. Consequently, I believe that the 'populist', anti-immigration and anti-feminist arguments of the FP and SD that are the focus of this study might as well have been expressed by representatives of other political parties. As I will discuss further in chapter 6, this is indeed a phenomenon we have witnessed in both Finland and Sweden, as well as elsewhere in Europe, in the time-period during which this study was conducted. With this in mind, I maintain that studying these political articulations, and elaborating on their consequences, remains a pertinent issue.

2.2 THE RISE OF THE POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT IN FINLAND AND SWEDEN

Despite this study's particular focus on Finland and Sweden, I will first say a few words about their neighbouring Scandinavian countries as well. During the 20th century the political fields in the Nordic countries of Denmark, Norway, Finland and Sweden were relatively stable, with conservative, agrarian, liberal, communist and social democratic parties taking turns in forming governments (Demker & Svåsand, 2005; Hellström, 2016; Jungar & Jupskås, 2014). The impact of social democracy remained strong, and the welfare state – the famous 'Nordic model' – was developed in conjunction with market economic reforms (Hellström, 2016). Since the turn of the new

millennium, however, all four countries have witnessed the rise of political parties with populist and anti-immigration agendas, shattering the traditional five-party hegemony substantially.

These newcomers on the political scene, the Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*, DPP), the Norwegian Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*, PP), the Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*, FP) and the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*, SD) have very different backgrounds. The DPP and PP emerged during the neoliberal populist wave of the 1970s (Goul Andersen & Bjørklund, 1990), the FP stems from an agrarian populist and social conservative Finnish Rural Party (*Suomen Maaseudun Puolue*, SMP) (Arter, 2010), whereas the SD have their roots in extreme-right and neo-fascist movements (Hellström & Nilsson, 2010). Nevertheless, Ann-Cathrine Jungar and Anders Ravik-Jupskås (Jungar, 2016; Jungar & Jupskås, 2014) argue that the Nordic populist parties have, despite their different historical legacies, converged ideologically, now representing socio-culturally authoritarian and socio-economically centrist views. Thus, the authors argue, these parties nowadays form their own party family within the broader populist radical right party family in Europe. The PP constitutes an exception of sorts, as the party takes a less authoritarian and more economically right-wing position, and may accordingly more rightfully be regarded as combining populist radical right and traditional conservative ideological positions. Nevertheless, all four parties share an anti-immigration and anti-multiculturalism position, and an ethnically nationalistic worldview that sees a 'unified people' as an ethnic, historical and linguistic entity. Contrary to (the various) scientific definitions of multiculturalism as, for example, a political philosophy (e.g., Harris, 2001; Kymlicka, 2012; Taylor, 1994), as integration of all ethnic and cultural groups, that is, when 'cultural diversity is a feature of the society as a whole, including all the various ethnocultural groups' (Berry, 2011, p. 2.7); or as emphasizing 'equality between and respect for the pluralism of cultures and group identities' (Verkuyten, 2007, p. 280), these parties' understanding of the concept is that it entails the paramount threat to the survival of the ethnically and culturally homogeneous nation.

The Nordic populist radical right parties, whose names already indicate their nationalist position, have formal and informal connections with each other as well as with other populist radical right parties in Europe (Jungar & Jupskås, 2014). Whereas radical right parties often adhere to what Kitschelt and McGann (1995) term 'the winning formula', that is, they typically combine a socio-culturally authoritarian position with a neo-liberal stance on socio-economic issues, the position of the Nordic populist parties is somewhat peculiar. The parties act in a context which bears the international reputation as the 'cradle of social welfare', and where both political and popular support for the maintenance of the welfare system remains strong (Jaeger, 2012; Pyrhönen, 2015). Indeed, the parties – with the exception of the PP – support the maintenance of the social democratic legacy of the Nordic welfare model. However, the parties hold what has been coined as a welfare chauvinist and

nationalist stance, according to which welfare benefits are meant for 'the common (Danish, Finnish or Swedish) man'; and not for immigrant Others (e.g., Mudde, 2007; Norocel, 2016; Pyrhönen, 2015, Van der Waal, Achterberg, Houtman, de Koster & Manevska, 2010).

In the Finnish context, the FP managed to shock both a national and international public with its *'Jytky'*-landslide victory in the national parliamentary elections of 2011. The party, receiving a mere 4.1 per cent of the votes in the previous elections in 2007 (Statistics Finland, 2011), now became the third largest party in Finland, gaining 19.1 per cent of the votes. In 2015 the FP, now the second largest party, gained 17.7 per cent of the votes and took place in the country's governing coalition (Statistics Finland, 2015). In Finnish the FP are called *Perussuomalaiset*, which literally means the 'ordinary' or 'basic' Finns. Before 2011 the FP had no official English name and the party was until then – and still often is – called 'The True Finns' in public debates. The capitalising of the term 'Finns' when adopting the name of the 'Finns Party' reflects the FP's aim to come across as the only genuine representative of the Finnish people (cf. Sakki & Cottier, 2012). Given the pejorative connotation of the term 'populist' it is perhaps somewhat surprising that the party does in fact refer to itself with this term (e.g., Finns Party, 2011, p. 6).

The FP was formed in 1995 as a continuation of the former Finnish Rural Party; however, nowadays support for the Finnish national culture and resistance to the EU, and to multiculturalism and immigration, are at the focal point of its agenda (Jungar & Jupskås, 2014). The party can be said to be divided into two camps: the more 'moderate' one, headed by the charismatic and popular party leader (and, at the time of writing, Foreign Minister of Finland) Timo Soini, on the one hand, and the more extreme anti-immigration faction, championed by former MP and current MEP Jussi Halla-aho on the other[1], In general, the party's voters are moving from the centre towards the right end of the political spectrum, a shift that has accelerated in speed since the party's entry into the conservative government in 2015 and its loss of voters especially to the Social Democratic party (Pitkänen & Westinen, 2016).

Turning to the context of Sweden, the triumphal march of the SD in Swedish politics began modestly at the local level in 1998, when the party received its first seats in the country's local municipalities. By 2006 it had extended its representation to cover half of the country's municipalities (Hellström, 2016). The party's national breakthrough came in 2010, when it received 5.7 per cent of the votes, thus crossing the 4 per cent electoral threshold to the national parliament for the first time. The SD, to their own delight and to the dismay of the political establishment, managed to double their support in the subsequent 2014 elections, gaining 12.9 per cent of the votes (Elections Sweden, 2014).

[1] In March 2017 Timo Soini declared that he will not continue as party leader after the party's general assembly in June 2017. Jussi Halla-aho, in turn, announced in March 2017 that he is running for the position as party leader.

The founding members of the party, which was originally born in 1988, came from violent extreme-right and neo-Nazi movements such as 'White Arian Resistance' (*Vit Ariskt Motstånd*) and 'Keep Sweden Swedish' (*Bevara Sverige Svenskt*) and persons invoved in 'white power music' (Hellström & Nilsson, 2010; Jungar & Jupskås, 2014). Since the 1990s, however, the SD have tried hard to clean up their image by ridding themselves of extremists and adopting a more moderate approach (Rydgren, 2005). Nowadays, the party calls itself 'social conservative' in terms of political ideological positioning, and defines 'Swedishness' not in terms of race or ethnicity, but in terms of culture (Hellström & Nilsson, 2010). Nevertheless, and as we shall see, the SD's conception of what constitutes 'Swedish culture' seems to carry a deeper, essentialist meaning that cannot lightly be accessed by 'outsiders'.

As already touched upon, the political agendas of the SD and FP are closely related, and the two parties can nowadays be regarded as belonging to the same populist radical right party family (cf. Arter, 2010; Jungar & Jupskås, 2014). Both the FP and the SD strongly deny that they support racism; thus, the party leaderships are constantly striking a balance between preserving a moderate image, on the one hand, and the radical, xenophobic voices that persist in the parties, on the other (Hatakka, Niemi & Välimäki, 2017). Yet, the differing origins of the two parties – populist agrarian in case of the FP and extreme-right in case of the SD – remain visible in the parties' actions as well as their rhetoric. The party leaderships have, for example, reacted differently to the scandals related to racist talk and deeds that have occurred within the parties: Timo Soini of the FP tends to react vaguely and dodge responsibility (Horsti, 2015), whereas Jimmie Åkesson of the SD is forced to take more explicit stances against such behaviour in order to shake off the party's racist label (e.g., Bjereld, 2012). Even though opinion polls indicate a rapidly shrinking popularity for the FP since it entered government position in 2015, whereas support for the SD stays strong and relatively stable, the FP is treated like any of the big established parties, whilst the SD remain 'outsiders', excluded and despised by the media and political opponents alike (cf. e.g., Hatakka et al., 2017; Hellström, 2016; Hagelund, Hellström, Meret & Pettersson, forthcoming).

In line with what is typical for radical right parties, both the FP and SD remain numerically male-dominated, with the FP's parliamentary group consisting of 26 male and 11 female MP's, and the SD's of 37 male as compared to 11 female MP's. Like most contemporary political parties, the FP and SD do not proclaim that they oppose gender equality, yet neither party have explicated aims in relation to this topic. Rather, they resist structural measures aimed at enhancing women's position in society through the argument that gender equality has already been achieved (cf., Lockwood Harris, Palazzolo & Savage, 2012; Norocel, 2016). Indeed, the politics of the FP and SD strongly rely, apart from the emphasis on resistance to immigration, on ideas of male power and dominance, where the relationship between men and women is based on difference and complementarity, and where the traditional family is

seen as a fundamental pillar of society (FP parliamentary election programme, 2011; SD Programme of Principles, 2011; cf. Mulinari and Neergaard, 2014; Norocel, 2013). Further, as feminist researchers have shown, these parties use the notion of gender equality as a card in the political game, where 'we' the gender equal Europeans (or Finns / Swedes) are positioned against 'them', the immigrants, oftentimes Muslims (De los Reyes, Molina & Mulinari, 2003; Horsti, 2016; Keskinen, 2013; Keskinen et al., 2009; Mulinari & Neergaard, 2014; Norocel, 2013). In Norocel's (2016, p. 5) wording, for European populist radical right parties 'the nominal gender equality endeavour becomes a discrete cue for cultural racism'. I return to the topic of this gendered version of nationalism of the populist radical right in chapter 3.2.1 below.

2.3 WHAT MAKES THE FINNISH-SWEDISH CONTEXT SPECIAL?

The two neighbouring countries of Finland and Sweden have much in common: they have close connections with each other and the other Nordic countries, they have strong welfare systems, and the position of women is advanced in international comparison. The countries even share a history of forming one common nation from the 13th century until the Eastern part, that is, today's Finland, became a part of Russia as a result of the Swedish-Russian war in 1808-09. Nevertheless, there are significant contextual differences that make a comparison between populist radical right discourses in the two countries interesting. The first one relates to the aforementioned different positions of the FP (in government) and the SD (a 'pariah-party' in opposition) and the contrasting treatment the parties receive in the public domain. The other factors, to which we shall now turn, concern first, the desynchronized developments of the social democratic welfare models in the two countries; second, the different emphases the countries' political scenes have put on matters related to gender equality and feminism; and finally, the history and current state of immigration and asylum policies in the two countries.

With regards to the first of these three matters, Sweden's history as a social democratic welfare state is long, with the concept of the *folkhem* (the people's home) dating back approximately 100 years. The country is commonly regarded as the primary representative of this welfare model (e.g., Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hellström, 2016). In Finland, by contrast, the welfare system started to resemble such a social democratic, universal understanding version thereof as late as in the 1980s, only to be limited again due to the financial crisis in the 1990s (Anttonen & Sipilä, 2000). Finland and Sweden thus constitute the two 'extremes' in terms of the development of the Nordic welfare model, which makes a comparison between the two countries of populist radical right discourse of welfare, and to whom welfare provisions do and do not belong, particularly interesting (Nordensvard & Ketola, 2014).

Second, as noted in the previous section, the position of the FP and the SD vis-à-vis gender equality is contradictory: on the one hand, they actively resist attempts at enhancing equality between the genders, yet on the other hand, the parties rhetorically use the notion of gender equality as a defining feature of 'us', the Finnish or Swedish people. This double-edged stance on gender equality of the SD and FP should certainly be examined in light of the reputation as well as the collective self-image within the Nordic countries of 'world leadership in gender equality' (Magnusson et al., 2008, p. 7). Tellingly, both in the Finnish and Swedish language there are separate words for, on the one hand, equality *for all* (Fin: *yhdenvertaisuus*, Swe: *jämlikhet*) and, on the other, equality between the genders (Fin: *tasa-arvo*, Swe: *jämställdhet*). Finland was among the first countries in the world to establish women's suffrage in 1906; Sweden followed in 1921. In the World Economic Forum's latest Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2016), which maps relative gaps between women and men across the areas of health, education, economy and politics, Finland ranks number two and Sweden number four in international comparison.

Yet, the discourse of gender equality and feminism seems to have gained more influence within Swedish as compared with Finnish politics. Indicative of this is that in 2014 the newly elected Swedish Foreign Minister proclaimed that she is pursuing a 'feminist foreign policy'. Further, in 2016 the Swedish government in 2016 founded a gender equality authority and declared itself feminist (Government of Sweden, 2016). Similarly illustrative is the rising electoral support for the feminist and anti-racist political party Feminist Initiative, which in its campaign to the 2014 national parliamentary elections profiled itself as the political antithesis of the SD. In Finland, by contrast, the programme of the conservative government elected in 2015 was void of a gender equality perspective – a matter the government received critique for from academics (Pusa, 2016). Finland, moreover, long lacked any official feminist political movement, yet at the time of writing (2017) a Finnish feminist party has been founded (Feministinen Puolue, 2017). Swedish legislation pertaining to the rights of sexual minorities is, furthermore, more liberal than its Finnish counterpart: Sweden has allowed gay marriage since 2009, whereas in Finland a torn parliament in 2014 approved a citizen's initiative for a law that eventually allowed equal marriage in March 2017.

The third issue mentioned above concerns the two countries' histories and current policies with regards to immigration. In contrast to the European colonial 'super-powers' such as the United Kingdom, Spain and France, larger-scale immigration to Finland and Sweden only took off after the Second World War (Palmberg, 2009), and the countries are indeed often regarded as 'outsiders' of colonialism (Vuorela, 2009). This view is, however, somewhat problematic in its simplicity: Sweden (to which Finland belonged) did possess a number of colonies for example in the West Indies. More importantly, colonial ideology reached far beyond its borders, thus being 'outside' colonialism in a politico-spatial sense did not mean you did not partake in and

inherit it ideologically. The concept of 'colonial complicity' refers to this peculiar role that the Nordic countries have had in the colonial projects, being neither core participants nor innocent bystanders (Vuorela, 2009). A consequence of this, according to Palmberg (2009), is that the inhabitants of the Nordic countries may today be less prepared for dealing with the prejudices non-white immigrants encounter, and racist expressions may more readily be seen as mere impoliteness towards strangers than as expressions of historically rooted ideologies.

After 'modern' immigration began in the Nordic region after the Second World War, Finland and Sweden chose to follow rather different paths in terms of their immigration and asylum policies. Despite the fact that the population of Sweden is nowadays almost double that of Finland (10 million compared with 5.5 million), the following figures reflect the asymmetry between the countries' immigration and asylum policies. Today, the percentages of foreign-borns in the two countries are quite disparate: 16.9 per cent in Sweden, compared with 5.8 per cent in Finland (World Economic Forum, 2015). Indeed, until the so-called refugee-crisis hit the countries in 2015, Sweden was widely known for its liberal asylum and immigration policy, illustrated for example in the fact that Sweden received 83,301 and accepted 31,220 asylum applications in 2014 (Swedish Migration Board, 2014). Finland, by contrast, has abided by a very strict policy, with corresponding figures of 3,706 and 1,346 for 2014 (Finnish Immigration Service, 2015). In 2015, the year of the 'refugee crisis', 162 877 people sought asylum in Sweden (Swedish Migration Board, 2015). That year Finland received 30,000 asylum applications, a number ten times greater than in previous years (Finnish Ministry of the Interior, 2016).

The sudden increase in asylum seekers to Finland in 2015 brought about an intense debate among politicians and the public alike about how the country should and could react. The polarisation between pro- and anti-immigration voices that had been reality in Sweden for many years now deepened in Finland as well. From its position in the Finnish government-coalition, the FP was able to influence Finland's policy-making that aimed to render Finland 'unattractive' in the eyes of asylum seekers, and to sharpen conditions for asylum, family unification, return-policy and appeals against negative asylum decisions. The government's policy engendered public outrage and protests. It also received critique from legal and human rights experts who deemed it to breach both the Finnish constitution and international human rights law (Finnish Broadcasting Company, 2016; Junkkari, 2016; van Gulik & Laajapuro, 2016).

Sweden initially stuck to its open immigration and asylum policy when the number of asylum seekers surged in the autumn of 2015. The government retreated from it in early 2016, however, for instance by sharpening border controls and conditions for asylum and family reunification (Muilu, 2016), a matter that was seen as a victory of sorts for the SD who had long advocated such a policy shift. Sweden's introduction of passport controls at the Danish

border soon spread across the Nordic region (Norden, 2016). Thus, as a consequence of the increased number of refugees and asylum seekers, freedom of movement within the Nordic countries was paused for the first time since its establishment more than 60 years ago. Both the Finnish and the Swedish restricted asylum-policies received a critical mentioning in Amnesty International's 2016/17 annual report on human rights violations across the world (Amnesty International, 2017).

The aforementioned factors – the reputation of Finland and Sweden as 'cradles of social welfare' and 'champions of gender equality'; the rise of the radical right in the two countries; their diverging histories and policies related to immigration and asylum (and the convergence of these policies after 2015); the differences between the FP's and SD's historical legacies and the similarities between their policies; and the differing ways in which they are treated by others – make the Finnish-Swedish setting an empirically interesting one for the examination of nationalist political discourse. In other words, these aspects entail that the FP and SD are pursuing and articulating their political aims under similar, yet in crucial aspects different conditions. In light of this, I began this research project with the expectation that exclusionary and gendered nationalist political appeals in Finland and Sweden may differ not only from each other, but also from those in previously studied country-contexts such as the UK, Belgium, France and the Netherlands. It is to social psychological research conducted on radical right discourse in these and other countries that we shall now turn.

3 THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF RADICAL RIGHT DISCOURSE

3.1 RADICAL RIGHT POLITICAL DISCOURSE

The free movement of people across national borders within the EU in conjunction with increasing pressures on the union to receive people fleeing from the world's conflict-laden zones has fuelled nationalist tendencies in many European countries. Nationalist political aims have been expressed especially by populist and radical right parties who position themselves as defenders of the sovereign nation-states and their peoples against the external pressures of immigration and globalisation that are framed in terms of danger and threat. The increasing popular support for populist and radical right political parties across Europe has, in turn, triggered social and political scientific researchers' interest in the penetrative power of their rhetoric. A vast amount of this research has, rather unsurprisingly, focused on one of the core elements of this rhetoric: its hostility towards immigrants.

Social psychologists have already for decades been interested in the ways that anti-immigrant political views are expressed in an age where blatant expressions of prejudice and racism are unlikely to gain any points of political credibility (e.g., Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Billig, 1988b). A defining feature of contemporary radical right political discourse is indeed its *deracialisation* (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Reeves, 1983), that is, that notions of race and ethnicity have largely been replaced by other constructs, for example that of the nation and national belonging. Here, appeals to restrict immigration are warranted through arguments about the protection of national borders and preservation of a 'national identity' (van Dijk, 1993a; Wodak & van Dijk, 2000). Such talk, even though the role of race is discursively downplayed, may nevertheless serve similarly racialised and discriminatory functions as blatant racist language (Augoustinos & Every, 2007).

Another way in which racist discourse has been 'sanitized' from notions of race (e.g., Barker, 1981; Gilroy, 1993) is through references to *cultural* rather than racial differences (e.g., Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Richardson & Colombo, 2014; Verkuyten, 2003; 2013; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). This phenomenon has been accompanied by the entry of immigrants in general and Muslims in particular as the primary Other in radical right political discourse that previously was dominated by anti-Semitism[2]. In this discourse, references

[2] Yet, there are troubling signs of rising anti-Semitism in Europe, as manifested in the increasing amount of hate-crimes aimed at Jews in several European countries (OSCE, 2016). Moreover, research on European fascist discourse in the 20th and 21st centuries demonstrates that some past patterns, including anti-Semitic rhetoric, continue to appear in the discourses of contemporary radical right parties in many European countries (cf. e.g., Billig, 1978, 1989; Richardson, 2013; Wood & Finlay, 2008;

are commonly made to incompatible cultural and ideological differences between Islam on the one hand, and Western and Christian culture on the other. Typically, misogynist, undemocratic, intolerant and authoritarian values are depicted as inherent features of Islamic culture that thus constitutes the contradistinction to the pillars of liberalism, democracy, tolerance and human and especially women's rights that the Western or European societies rest on. Such *cultural essentialist* discourse implies that since these differences are inherent, *essential* characteristics of cultures, they cannot be overcome. In other words, according to this view the co-existence of Islam with Western and Christian values is an impossibility. This anti-Islamic discourse serves to protect the speaker from accusations of racism or intolerance, first, because he or she places him- or herself as an explicit defender of benevolent, liberal values (cf. Wetherell & Potter, 1992), and second, because criticism is directed at an abstract target, that is, at Islam as a culture and ideology, and not at individual Muslims (e.g., Richardson & Colombo, 2014; Verkuyten, 2003; 2013; Wood & Finlay, 2008).

This and other *self-defensive discursive strategies* (van Dijk, 1993a) that protect the speaker from accusations of holding prejudiced or racist views certainly exist in everyday talk as well (e.g., Augoustinos & Every, 2007). The need for them is, however, especially strong in the context of politics, where arguments are expressed precisely in order for the speaker to come across as trustworthy and informed, and for the sake of appealing to and persuading potential voters. The *denial of racism* (e.g., Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Condor, Figgou, Abell, Gibson, & Stevenson, 2006; van Dijk, 1992; 1993a) is such a strategy, which typically entails laying the grounds for negative views about immigrants or ethnic minorities with the disclaimer 'I am not racist, but…', or 'I have nothing against immigrants, but…'. Once racism has been thus denied the speaker may take yet one further step: he or she can *reverse* it (van Dijk, 1993a; cf. Hopkins, Reicher & Levine, 1997). In the context of radical right politics this can mean accusing either immigrants of being racist towards the majority population, or political opponents of having betrayed 'the people' in favour of immigrants, thus similarly engaging in racism towards the former group. The phenomenon of reversal of racism has been demonstrated empirically for instance in a study comparing radical right political leaflets in several European countries (Richardson & Colombo, 2014), as well as in the rhetoric of the French *Front National* (FN) (van Dijk, 1993a) and the British

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Wodak & Richardson, 2013) and is still a central feature of, for instance, the rhetoric of the Hungarian radical right (Kovács and Szilágyi, 2013). Anti-semitic discourse has indeed not disappeared, but persists also in radical right hate-speech in Western European countries, sometimes in combination with more 'modern' forms of racism (e.g., Wood & Finlay, 2008), and often concealed in the form of metaphors and humour, as demonstrated for example in the Swiss (Musolff, 2013), Austrian (Wodak, 2009) and French (Beauzamy, 2013) contexts. Indeed, sociologists Cousin and Fine (2012) have argued in favour of an approach to contemporary racism that integrates sensitivity to its anti-black, anti-Muslim as well as its anti-Semitic elements.

National Party (BNP) (Atton, 2006; Goodman & Johnson, 2014; Wood & Finlay, 2008).

Other self-defensive discursive strategies documented by social psychological researchers include those that function to downplay the role of the speaker's subjectivity and instead increase the air of credibility and matter-of-factness of a given argument. The speaker may, for instance, refer to 'common-sense knowledge' (e.g., Billig, 1987; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b), to external 'facts' and prevailing consensus (e.g., Potter, 1996; Verkuyten, 1998), or to factors unrelated to issues of race and ethnicity, such as economic or societal ones (e.g., Augoustinos, Tuffin & Rapley, 1999), when justifying negative stances towards immigrants and ethnic minorities. Commonly, radical right politicians deploy the strategy of generalising negative behaviour to a homogenised outgroup, that is, they refer to single cases of criminality committed by immigrants, and to crime statistics based on nationality only whilst omitting other demographic features that are statistically connected with crime, such as age, gender, urban/rural residence and socio-economic class. This creates an illusory direct causality between the nationality or religion of the perpetrator and the crime, and serves to 'show' that immigrants and asylum-seekers are over-represented in crime and rape statistics (e.g., Wood & Finlay, 2008), thereby motivating sharpened immigration and return policies. Other times resistance to immigration can be warranted by depicting immigrants and asylum-seekers as entailing excessive costs to society and exploiting the welfare system (e.g., Mudde, 2007), a matter to which we shall return shortly.

What the aforementioned rhetorical strategies accomplish, in sum, is that they serve efficiently to construct the speaker as informed, logical and unbiased, and immigrants and asylum-seekers as deviant, inferior and/or undeserving Others (Condor, 1988; Hopkins et al., 1997; van Dijk, 1993a). In other words, they serve to give a *negative Other and positive self-presentation* (van Dijk, 1992). In the context of populist radical right political discourse, this image is further strengthened by depicting the self and, in social psychological terms, the *ingroup*, typically the own political party, as representatives of 'the common people' (e.g., Mudde, 2007; Rapley, 1998; Rooyackers & Verkuyten, 2012). The speaker positions him- or herself as standing by these 'common' or 'ordinary' people and protecting their rights. Here, another negatively portrayed Other or *outgroup* enters the scene, this time represented not by immigrants, but by political antagonists, typically (female) leftist and green politicians, feminists and defenders of multiculturalism. This Other becomes accused of elitism, and of favouring immigrants and ethnic minority members at the expense of 'the people'. The juxtaposition between the self as a prototypical member of the 'ordinary people' can be highlighted through the use of colloquial language and appeals to 'common-sense', as studies for example in the Netherlands (Rooyackers & Verkuyten, 2012) and Australia (Rapley, 1998) have demonstrated. When combined with the afore-described strategy of reversing racism, this discourse constructs the political antagonist

as an elitist and racist Other, whereas the self and its fellow ingroup members of 'the people', in turn, become the 'true' victims of racism. Thus claiming the position of a *target* of racism can be an efficient way for radical right politicians to shake off their party's reputation of being the *perpetrator* thereof (cf. Wood & Finlay, 2008).

These constructions of 'us against them' in radical right political discourse capture much of what Reicher, Haslam and Rath (2008), from the perspective of social identity and social categorisation theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987), have called the Five-Step Social Identity Model of the development of collective hate. Discussing examples of outgroup hate ranging from the atrocities committed by the Nazis to contemporary racism and Islamophobia, the authors propose that the explanation for such acts of hatred can be sought in the following five-step process: 1) the construction of an ingroup with a common identity; 2) the definition of targets as external to the ingroup; 3) the representation of these targets as endangering ingroup identity; 4) the championing of the ingroup as (uniquely) good; and 5) embracing the eradication of the outgroup as necessary to the defence of virtue (Reicher et al., 2008, p. 1313). Essentially, through this process outgroup hatred and intolerance – even eradication – become not only warranted but *celebrated* as a necessary, moral virtue in order for the ingroup to be protected from destruction. As emphasized by the authors, the construction of the ingroup as good and virtuous is as essential as the construction of the outgroup as bad and threatening to the ingroup. The model has been applied by Verkuyten (2013) in his study of the anti-Islamic discourse of the Dutch radical right party leader Geert Wilders. Verkuyten showed how, indeed, Wilders constructed an image in which the eradication of Islam in Holland is a necessary fight where good (we) stands against evil (them). The acceptability of this moral fight was further enhanced through Wilder's references to non-personal rather than personal categories, that is, to Islam as a system of belief rather than to Muslims as persons.

A final aspect of (radical right) political discourse documented by previous social psychological research that I wish to highlight is the use of *temporality* – time past, present and future – as a discursive resource (e.g., Mols & Jetten, 2014; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b, see also Condor, 2006, for an interview-based study, conducted in the UK, of the use of temporality within lay people's constructions of nationhood). In discursive constructions of a narrow, exclusive nation, the past may become an especially important argumentative tool: an era of ethnic homogeneity, when everything was 'better', is imagined and constructed in contrast to present immigration policies, and to future 'threatening' scenarios of a multicultural society. Famous legends and myths ingrained in the collective memory of people can be used in order to (re)construct a sense of shared identity of 'the people' and the nation (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b). An example of such a myth is the Swedish *folkhem,* the people's home, referring to the creation of the Swedish welfare system. This concept has frequently been depicted by populist radical right politicians as an

exclusive property of the Swedish people – one that would not endure an extension of this national category (e.g., Hellstöm, 2016; Norocel, 2016). In the Finnish context, Sakki and Cottier (2012) have shown how references to past traditions such as folk-music and national art, and to the courage of Finns in times of war have similarly been used in populist radical right election documents in order to construct an exclusionary category of the nation and its people. Indeed, radical right political discourse relying on the past is not seldom phrased in narratives of war, in which the self (the radical right politician) and his or her fight against multiculturalism is likened to national war-time heroes of the past and their battlefield-victories, as demonstrated for example in studies of the rhetoric of Belgian, French and Dutch radical right party leaders (Mols & Jetten, 2014) and of Austrian (Wodak & Forchtner, 2014) and German radical right politicians (Posch, Stopfner, & Kienpointner, 2013).

Whereas radical right politicians thus tend to draw an image of a 'glorious past' when the nation was 'ethnically homogenous', references to the 'decline of the welfare-state' when aiming to appeal to nostalgic emotions is a rhetorical strategy typically deployed by the political left (Coontz, 1992). However, as Mols and Jetten's (2014) study demonstrated, the precise *type* of nostalgia elicited by politicians is highly context-dependent. The empirical context of the present study, that of Finland and Sweden, differs from the previously studied ones in that large-scale immigration began so late that the countries' welfare systems – the famous 'Nordic model' – were developed during a time when the countries' populations were relatively homogeneous (Finseraas, 2012). Moreover, support for the welfare systems among the Nordic populations is strong and occurs across the social and political spectrum (Jaeger, 2012; Pyrhönen, 2015). Research has, de facto, demonstrated that these historical and societal peculiarities are reflected in Finnish and Swedish populist radical right and nationalist political discourse: the preservation of the welfare state is a salient feature in the FP's as well as the SD's anti-immigration political argumentation (Norocel, 2016; Nordensvard & Ketola, 2014; Pyrhönen, 2015). In their study of election documents of the FP and SD during 2009 to 2012 Nordensvard and Ketola (2014) conclude that both parties link welfare with nationalism in their advocating of a 'welfare nation state' (p. 359), where welfare services should be provided to the national citizens only. However, according to the authors, whilst the FP locate the severest enemy of the 'people's welfare' in the EU and its threat to Finland's sovereignty, the SD view immigration and multiculturalism as its main foes.

The present study is based upon and aims to contribute to the body of research outlined in this section. It also shares the emphasis of social psychological researchers of political discourse that if we are to understand the meanings that different concepts and categories acquire in this discourse, it needs to be examined as part of its surrounding argumentative context (Billig, 1987; Hopkins et al., 1997; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b; cf. section 3.4 below). Thus, this study endeavours through its comparative approach and its focus

on political articulations in the online sphere of the blogs to enhance our understanding of contemporary nationalist and populist radical right political discourse. It will explore how nationalist political appeals are constructed in the discourse contained in political blogs that are specifically aimed at voter persuasion and mobilisation (e.g., Nilsson & Carlsson, 2014). In so doing, it will be sensitive to the specificities of the Finnish-Swedish context, and to how these specificities may be reflected in the discourse.

3.2 THE DIVERSITY OF VOICES WITHIN POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT PARTIES

The studies outlined in the previous section predominantly focus on the anti-immigration discourse of white men. This is not all too surprising, as populist and radical right parties remain heavily dominated by – white men. Matters are, however, slowly changing. Women have reached prominent positions in radical right parties, for example Siv Jensen of the PP in Norway and Pia Kjaersgaard of the DPP in Denmark. Susi Meret (2015) has shown how, in her rhetoric, the DPP leader Pia Kjærsgaard successfully combines elements of control, organisation and political savviness with more stereotypical notions of women as mothers and emotional beings. Further, most Europeans will recognise the face of one of the continent's most powerful and successful contemporary political leaders, Marine Le Pen of the French radical right party FN. Le Pen has indeed been able to substantially increase her party's popularity, not least among female voters (Felix, 2015), and has chances of winning the 2017 French presidential elections.

Those who saw the 2014 parliamentary election campaign-video of the fiercely anti-immigration Sweden Democrats might have been surprised to see that the two main actors in the film were young non-white SD-members, who proclaimed the party's anti-racist mission. The contrast to the party's campaign film in the previous elections in 2010 – where 'Swedes' and Muslims were overtly positioned against each other, and which was banned because it was deemed to exhort to racist hatred (Larsson & Kallin, 2010) – captures the shift that has taken place in the SD's public profile in the 21st century, a step along the path the party tries to trod in order to cleanse its image of racism (Rydgren, 2005). Starting from the 2010's the party's popularity among Swedes with immigrant background has indeed been steadily increasing and was at 8 per cent in May 2015 (Statistics Sweden, 2015), despite the fact that the party's emphasis on cultural homogeneity and resistance to immigration remains firm.

The aforementioned examples reveal that diversity is increasing within the populist radical right. A central aim of this dissertation is to delve further into this issue by exploring the worldviews of women and immigrants who have chosen to join a party that is hostile to both gender equality and cultural and ethnic diversity. Ultimately, the goal of this endeavour is to add something to

our understanding of the increasing popularity of the populist radical right among constituencies other than the stereotype of the white, working-class, rural male (cf. e.g., Pyrhönen, 2015).

3.2.1 EXPLORING THE WORLDVIEW OF WOMEN WITHIN POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT PARTIES

Research into nationalism has been criticised by feminist scholars for ignoring its gendered aspects. The critics have drawn attention to the multiple ways – abstract as well as concrete – in which women have been implicated in nationalism (McClintock, 1995; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989). In an abstract sense, as symbols of national collectivities (e.g., 'Mother Russia', the 'Finnish maiden') women have been and are included in the discourses that construct ethnic or national categories. Concretely, in the role of mothers they serve as biological reproducers of national groups and as transmitters of cultural traditions. Also feminist historians have highlighted the gendered nature of militant nationalist ideologies, such as those of the Weimar Republic and Nazi-Germany (Bridenthal, Grossmann & Kaplan, 1984). In nationalist struggles men are typically associated with the military, the active protector and fighter, whereas women serve as symbols of the civil, 'the motherland', the protected (Howard & Prividera, 2004).

White women's bodies can thus become both the symbolic and the actual battlefields of nationalism: as symbols of an imagined 'pure' nation they need protection from external intruders, and a rape of one of 'our' women by a 'foreigner' becomes interpreted as a charge against the entire nation (McClintock, 1995). At the same time, paradoxically, women may become the threat to and traitor of the 'white nation', as in radical right rhetorical juxtapositions of the anti-immigration, working class 'common man' against the 'elitist' female who supports multiculturalism (Keskinen, 2011). In her research into nationalist and anti-feminist discourse in the Finnish context, Suvi Keskinen (2013) coined the term 'white border guard masculinities' for such antagonisms where gender, race, ethnicity and class intersect, and where 'white men struggle to save the "white nation", and the "civilized West"… [from] naïve white women whose misuse of power has led to both feminism "gone too far" and the decline of the "white nation".' (p. 231).

How might we then conceive of women who cross and challenge these gendered boundaries of nationalism; who join the 'white border guard masculinities' in their quest? The worldview of women that choose, for example, to support or join nationalist and populist radical right parties remains an understudied topic. Yet, some progress in this regard has been made in recent years, perhaps due to the increasing influence of female politicians of the radical right, not least with regards to strengthening the parties' popular appeal (Felix, 2015). Based on their extensive study comparing voting behaviour for the radical right across seven countries, Niels

Spierings and Andrej Zaslove (2015) argue that even though these parties maintain a stronger support among men, this *gender gap* has been overemphasised in the literature. Some studies indicate, perhaps surprisingly, that up to 40 per cent of the support for the radical right internationally comes from women (Spierings, Zaslove, Mügge & de Lange, 2015). Moreover, Spierings and Zaslove (2015) conclude that women and men seem to vote for the radical right for the same major reason: because they oppose immigration. Other scholars have, however, provided different reasons for why women and men are drawn to the radical right, including gender-related disparate political interests (Fontana, Sidler & Hardmeier, 2006), different levels of religiosity between women and men (Gidengil, Hennigar, Blais & Nevitte, 2005) and the masculine profile of radical right parties (Kimmel, 2007). In sum, it does seem, first, that the topic of women within the radical right deserves more attention, and, second, that any interpretations of what lies behind the 'gender gap' need to take into account the specificity of the context wherein the phenomenon is studied.

Turning thus to the context of our present interest, in a rare study in which women in the SD were interviewed Diana Mulinari and Anders Neergaard conclude that the form of femininity that these women experience is 'difficult to reconcile with the Swedish discourse on gender equality, rooted as it is in women's equal participation in the labour market on the one hand, and double-income households on the other – a discourse that is central for women politicians in all Swedish parties from the left to right' (2014, p. 46). Seen from a slightly different perspective, this societal discourse of gender equality seems equally hard to accommodate with the populist radical right ideological emphasis on the submission of women to the positions of wives and mothers at the cost of the dominance of men, the rightful heads of the family (cf. e.g., Mulinari & Neergaard, 2010, p. 56–57; Stevens, 1999, p. 143–148). Given that women in the Northern European context of Finland and Sweden hold a more emancipated position in comparison with, for example, South American cultures (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2015), this context is an exceptionally fruitful one for exploring how women within the populist radical right reconcile issues of gender equality with such a patriarchal political ideology. Thus, I am in this dissertation asking how female politicians within populist radical right parties negotiate the contradictory position of being a woman in a party that stands for white male heterosexual privilege and cherishes traditional gender roles (De los Reyes et al., 2003; Fekete, 2006), yet simultaneously in a time and place where gender equality has become 'common place' (Billig, 1987; Holli, 2001) – that is, in a Nordic country. Might tensions between these two contradicting ideologies appear in the female populist radical right politicians' discourse, and if so, how are these tensions discursively negotiated?

The social psychological realms of critical discursive (e.g., Edley, 2001) and rhetorical psychology (e.g., Billig, 1987) provide means for attempting to answer the aforementioned questions. More specifically, the questions may be

approached through the concept of *ideological dilemmas*: 'contrary themes of social knowledge … revealed in everyday discourse' (Billig et al., 1988: 21). Michael Billig, the father of rhetorical psychology, drew a distinction between what resembles a Marxist understanding of an intellectual, dominating 'elite' kind of ideology, on the one hand, and a lived ideology, on the other (cf. Edley, 2001). The concept of lived ideology bears close resemblance to the notions of 'common-sense' or 'culture', and is, as opposed to intellectual ideology, inherently ambiguous in nature. This ambiguity is evident already when we look at expressions such as 'too many cooks spoil the broth' on the one hand, and 'many hands make light work' on the other. It seems that every rule and wisdom brings with it an equally convincing counter-wisdom. In our everyday lives we are constantly negotiating such contradictory pieces of social knowledge, which can then appear in our discourse and actions in the form of ideological dilemmas. This holds true, for instance, for the teacher who tries to strike a balance between authoritarian and democratic teaching styles, or for the 'modern parent', who struggles to allocate his or her time wisely between work and family. So might, I argue, tensions between norms of gender equality and a patriarchal political ideology appear in the discourse of female populist radical right politicians. I will return to this argument in section 5.2.1 below. For now, I will let it lead me to the second, equally conspicuous tension that this dissertation sets out to explore: that of being an immigrant in an anti-immigration political party.

3.2.2 CONSTRUCTIONS OF ETHNIC IDENTITY IN POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT DISCOURSE

Why do persons with immigrant or ethnic minority belonging choose to join an anti-immigrant political party? How do they come to terms with this contradictory position? Posing such questions may sadly not take the researcher far, as their answers will certainly be complex and depend on any individual politician's personal history and experiences. Alternatively, however, one might seek to approach this intriguing topic from the perspective of identities, and, more precisely, from the perspective of how individuals may accommodate multiple (more or less compatible) identities within the self – an area in which social psychological research has insights and analytical tools to offer. The aforementioned questions may then become rephrased into: how do populist radical right politicians discursively account for their ethnic minority belonging in relation to their anti-immigration political affiliation?

Difficulties do not end here, however, since the mere quest of trying to agree upon a definition of what constitutes an 'ethnic' identity has caused social scientists a headache for decades. Max Weber (1968) conceptualized an ethnic group as characterized by a belief in a common origin and ancestry, which enables a sense of community and belonging. The belief in such a common origin is thus a way of distinguishing what we can call an ethnic

identity from other social identities, that is, our sense of who we are based on our group memberships such as gender or class (Tajfel, 1978; Talfel & Turner, 1979). Asking where this identity derives from brings us to another long-lasting dispute about ethnic identity: should it be regarded at the level of structure or agency (Verkuyten, 2005)? In other words, should one take society as one's starting point, and conceive of ethnic identity as something that individuals acquire from the cultural, political and ideological context that surrounds them? Or should one rather flip the coin and approach the concept from an individualistic perspective that would examine ethnic identity as an accomplishment of individual choices and assertions?

Scholars such as Maykel Verkuyten (2005) and Charles Westin (2010) have argued that neither of these approaches is able to grasp the complex character of ethnic identity. Rather, if we are to gain a better understanding of the richness of the concept, we need to combine different social psychological approaches, despite their ontological and epistemological differences and disparate empirical interests. Inspired by this thought, my approach in this dissertation is one that remains sensitive to the implications that shared discourses and meanings at the societal level have on individuals' ethnic identity, yet one that does not abandon the notion that individuals have agency with respect to how they identify in ethnic terms. Social psychological research has indeed highlighted that individuals have various optional – ethnic or other – identities available to them that they may focus on, depending both on the prominence of any certain identity, as well as on the particular social context (Verkuyten, 2005). One may feel like a teacher at work, like a wife at home, and like a devoted feminist in discussions with friends and acquaintances. This variability and flexibility of identities does not imply that people cannot or would not develop deeper, more enduring senses of who they are (Verkuyten, 2005). Rather, and bearing in mind Weber's phrasing 'belief' in a common origin, this interpretation allows us to conclude that like other social identities ethnic identities are flexible, relational and situational, and not absolute or 'natural' categories (e.g., Condor, 2000; Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2009; Liebkind, Mähönen, Varjonen & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2015; Reicher, 2001).

However, not all social identities are equally easy for the individual to reconcile. How do, for example, populist radical right politicians with immigrant or other ethnic minority background categorise themselves in ethnic terms? Social psychological research tells us that these politicians do have various options in this regard, and can construct for themselves both insider and outsider positions in relation to more than one ethnic group (Liebkind et. al, 2015). They may, for example, categorise themselves at a superordinate level (Hornsey & Hogg, 2002), accept their minority group membership at a superficial level but experience it with discomfort (Ouwerkerk & Ellemers, 2001), maintain their ethnic minority self-definition whilst adopting the majority culture (Liebkind, 2001), 'subtype' the self into a favourable subcategory within the minority group (e.g., Barreto & Ellemers, 2003), or try to leave the group for an alternative, more attractive one

(Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 2002). We cannot know which choices these politicians prefer, or whether they consider such choices relevant in the first place. By analysing their blog accounts we may, however, gain insight into how these politicians deal with their multiple – converging or contradictory – identities; how they construct these identities based on the various ethnic, political, cultural, and ideological alternatives that are available to them; and what consequences such identity-constructions may have in a social and political sense. Indeed, in their analyses of Scottish politicians' discourse about the nation, Reicher and Hopkins (2001b), from the perspective of social categorisation theory (Turner et al., 1987), have shown that in such discourse national identity is not merely a matter of being, but a matter of *becoming* that may be used effectively in order to achieve particular social and political outcomes. Specifically, shifting the boundaries between different social categories, and *strategically* placing oneself within certain (such as the 'Scottish' or 'Swedish') ones and outside of others, are powerful means whereby politicians may come across as representatives of 'the national community', and mobilise action for nationalist causes.

In the present study I will approach the intricacy of ethnic identity constructions from a critical discursive perspective. Discursive research on ethnic identity constructions has been able to show that their socially negotiated and situated, and multi-layered and complex character is discernible from this perspective as well (Merino & Tileagă, 2011; Sala, Dandy & Rapley, 2010; Verkuyten & de Wolf, 2002; Yamaguchi, 2005). Oftentimes, ethnic minority members have access to both the majority (usually the 'host' population) and minority (immigrant or other) groups, which means that ethnic minority identities can be given meaning not only in relation to the majority group, but also through comparisons to members of the ethnic ingroup (Sala et al., 2010).

Ethnic self-definitions can, furthermore, occur at different levels of identification: they can emerge from categorisations offered or imposed by others, but they can also be actively constructed and claimed by individuals themselves. These two levels of identification that Mitch Berbrier has called *assigned* and *asserted* (Berbrier, 2008) can co-exist, and complement as well as contradict each other. Verkuyten and de Wolf (2002) have explored this empirically in the Dutch context, demonstrating how ethnic Chinese participants drew upon various discursive resources, such as physical appearance, early socialisation, and the possession of critical attributes in order to construct their identities at the distinct yet related levels of *being, feeling* and *doing* Chinese. These ethnic self-definitions were constructed through a conglomerate of notions of determinism versus personal agency, continuity versus change, and tensions between solidarity towards and differentiation from the ethnic minority group. In a similar vein, Merino and Tileagă's (2011) study of members of the Mapuche population in Chile demonstrated how the participants drew upon practical and common-sense reasoning in order to claim, negotiate and resist certain ethnic identities. The

interviewees distinguished between knowing about their shallower, ascribed ethnic identities, and feeling a deeper sense of personal belonging to an ethnic group. Together, these studies emphasize that ethnic identity is not simply something that is given to people by nature or nurture, but also something that people actively seek in social interaction.

Building upon the line of discursive research on ethnic identities described above, and informed by Reicher and Hopkins (2001b) research into shifting national identities in political discourse[3], I wish in this study to enhance our understanding of how populist radical right politicians with immigrant or other ethnic minority background construct and accommodate their (compatible as well as conflicting) identities within their discourse. In contrast to the aforementioned studies on discursive constructions of ethnic identity the present one does not explore this topic in the context of individual or group interviews, which, given their interactive format and the active role of the researcher, in a way *presuppose* negotiations of identity constructs (cf. Potter & Hepburn, 2005). This study also differs from the discussed ones in the important way that an apparent conflict exists between the bloggers' labels as 'immigrants' and their position in an anti-immigration party. My interest lies, thus, in exploring whether this conflict appears in the discourse of the populist radical right politicians with immigrant and other ethnic minority background, and if so, how this conflict might be resolved in individually written blog-entries.

In terms of the analytical toolkit of critical discursive psychology, I set out to explore how the bloggers construct their *subject positions* (Davies & Harré, 1990; Edley, 2001; Edley & Wetherell, 1997; Wetherell, 1998), which in Edley's (2001, pg. 210) words '…connect[s] the wider notions of discourses and interpretative repertoires to the social construction of particular selves', based on their identification with a multitude of ethnic, cultural, political and other social categories. I see subject positions not as roles, fixed states or personhoods, but as the locations or identities that speakers claim in their talk and text. I remain conscious of the malleability of these identities; in other words, I do not assume that a person can claim only one subject position for him- or herself in any given situation. Thus, I aim to study how the subject positions of the bloggers might vary in conjunction with the particular discursive context in which these positions appear, and, importantly in the case of political discourse, in accordance with the rhetorical aims of the individual blogger.

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[3] Reicher and Hopkins' (2001b) highly influential book *Self and nation* explores nationalist political discourse taking social categorisation theory (SCT; Turner et al., 1987) as its main theoretical standpoint. In other words, unlike that of the present study, the approach of Reicher and Hopkins is not a social constructionist one. Nevertheless, these two studies both have as their central interest how people position themselves within various social (ethnic or other) categories in political discourse, and on the action-orientation of such positionings (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b, p. 151), that is, on what the positionings may accomplish in a social and political sense.

3.3 THE PECULIARITIES OF POLITICAL BLOGGING

Apart from the focus on the perspective of white men, most of the research on radical right discourse described in section 3.1 above has concentrated on traditional media, such as newspaper articles (e.g., Verkuyten, 2013) and official party websites (e.g., Atton, 2006), as well as on political debates (e.g., van der Valk, 2003), speeches (e.g., Mols & Jetten, 2014) and leaflets (Goodman & Johnson, 2014). Discourse and conversation analytical researchers have, however, recently started paying attention to (political) discourse within the Internet-based social media, such as Facebook (e.g, Burke & Goodman, 2012), and have begun to develop research methods in order to study this 'new' public space (e.g, Giles, Stommel, Paulus, Lester & Reed, 2015; Morison, Gibson, Wigginton & Crabb, 2015; Jowett, 2015). Yet, an area that has remained without much attention from discursive researchers is political blogging as a tool for expressing radical right, nationalist and anti-immigration political views. This may seem quite surprising in light of the fact that research in the field of online political communication has demonstrated that political blogs have become a novel form of public sphere, one that with its particular digital and communicative features allows politicians to convey their messages in different discursive ways than traditional media channels do (Cammaerts, 2009; Silva, 2016). Such an alternative public sphere may be especially important for marginalized groups, for instance for politicians who are not given the attention within mainstream media that they would wish for. This pertains both to the FP and SD before their national electoral breakthroughs (2011 and 2010), and remains very much the case for the SD, whom Swedish mainstream media still try hard to debar (Hatakka et al., 2017; Hellström, 2016).

Importantly, moreover, research suggests that politicians are motivated to use blogs for the sake of influencing the political debate (Farrell & Drezner, 2008). Blogs often contain the possibility for the readers to comment upon the blogger's entries, an element that enables a discussion to emerge between the blogger and his or her readership. Because of such interactive and collaborative features that allow the readers to communicate directly with the blogging politician, blogs can serve as a platform for political participation and debate (Baumer et al., 2011). In this sense, blogs create significant opportunities for political mobilisation (Nilsson & Carlsson, 2014).

The discovery that blogs along with other forms of new and social media such as Facebook and Twitter encourage their consumers to actively participate in political discussions has prompted researchers to acknowledge the democratic value of such media (cf. Lanlois, Elmer, McKelvey, et al., 2009; Loader & Mercea, 2011). Nevertheless, this democratic coin has a flipside to it: the development of the social media has rendered the public sphere ever more

divided between internally likeminded groups, a development that can inhibit open debate (e.g., Carpentier, 2011). Blogs and other forms of social media may also be used for anti-social purposes, such as threats and hate-speech (Cammaerts, 2008); and, on the other hand, political dissidents who blog run the risk of being silenced or punished by those in rule (Morozov, 2011).

A further issue of concern is that blogs, in circumventing the intermediating role played by journalists, not only empower their users, that is, the citizens (Loader & Mercea, 2011), but may also function as a channel for politicians across the political spectrum to control and manipulate the messages that are being conveyed (O'Neill, 2010). Finally, and of special relevance for the present study, blogs can serve as a platform for producing pronounced populist identities that rely on dichotomies between 'us' (e.g., the blogger and 'the people') and 'them' (e.g., the 'elite') (cf. Nilsson, 2012).

Discursive research into online political communication shows some support for the notion that this communication is more extreme (e.g., Billig, 2001; Burke & Goodman, 2012; Goodman, 2007) than its 'offline' counterpart. These findings may be at least partly explained, on the one hand, by the likelihood that individuals holding stronger views are those that are most active in online debates, and, on the other hand, by the possibility of maintaining a large degree of anonymity and thus having less at stake in the online sphere (e.g., Burke & Goodman, 2012). Matters are different within the political blogosphere, however, where the identity of the blogging politician is intentionally and clearly disclosed. Furthermore, arguments in political blogs can be constructed not merely through 'traditional' political rhetoric, but through an intricate intermingling of verbal, digital, visual and communicative features that jointly construct the arguments (Baumer et al., 2011; Silva 2016). Research shows that blogs have come to constitute a uniqe kind of online sphere that seems especially fruitful for bringing together groups of 'likeminded': political blogs are often connected to each other through hyperlinks, and such webs of blogs can then develop their own norms of how information is distributed (Coddington, 2014).

The present study takes as its point of departure research that has hinted towards the growing importance of social media in the transmission of radical right and nationalist political discourse (e.g., Allen, 2011; Bratten, 2005). This phenomenon is especially interesting to study in the context of Finland and Sweden, where the electoral fortunes of the radical right in the 21st century was greatly advanced by such media (Hatakka, 2016; Horsti, 2015; Keskinen, 2013). Further, Finland and Sweden occupy the top positions in international comparison in terms of Internet and social media penetration (Karlsson & Åström, 2014; Strandberg, 2013); thus, political blogs are particularly widely and actively consumed in both countries. My present interest lies in how political blogs may function as a particular – indeed as a particularly *advantageous* – sphere for populist radical right and nationalist political discourse.

It would be a false assumption, however, that the discourse contained in the 'alternative' sphere of political blogs remains in that sphere. Rather, because also journalists seek information from political blogs, the entries in any one blog reach far beyond the limits of its unique readership. Thus, blog-writings may well, and do, have an impact on mainstream media and thus on a broader public (Baumer et al., 2011; Ekdale, Namkoong, Fung & Perlmutter, 2010; Farrell & Drezner, 2008). As for radical right, nationalist and also racist political discourse, blogs constitute an important stepping-stone from which this discourse slowly but certainly becomes normalised in societal and political debates (Lentin & Titley, 2011; Maasilta, 2011; Mäkinen, 2016).

In focusing on discourse contained in populist radical right political blogs, one central aim of my research is to widen the range of data sources that we rely on for furthering our social psychological knowledge. As noted, even though we are conscious of the importance of blogs for political communication and mobilisation, there is a shortage of qualitative, discursive research exploring how the particular features of blogs are exploited for politically persuasive aims. This may be precisely due to the barriers involved in grasping and transcribing into analysable material the multitude of verbal, digital, communicative and (audio-)visual components in a political blog. A further central endeavour of this study is thus to fill this methodological gap in qualitative social psychological research by demonstrating how an analysis that goes 'beyond the text' contained in political blogs may be conducted. More specifically, I will argue in favour of a methodological approach that relies on critical discursive and rhetorical psychology, yet that also integrates analytical procedures from narrative psychology as well as visual studies and studies on online political communication (see section 3.4 below). The crucial benefit of such an approach, I will assert, is that it is able to grasp the patchwork of verbal, digital, visual and communicative components that characterises discourse contained in political blogs. My hope is that this approach allows us to improve our ability to analyse political blog-discourse, thereby advancing social psychological research on contemporary political communication and persuasion more generally. Next, I will outline in more detail the ontological and epistemological assumptions that guide the present study.

3.4 A CRITICAL DISCURSIVE AND RHETORICAL PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT POLITICAL BLOGS

My main mission in this study is to explore the discourse contained in political blogs of populist radical right politicians, and to elaborate on the societal implications this discourse might have. I have chosen to do so by relying on the ontological and epistemological assumptions that derive from the multidisciplinary field of social constructionism (e.g., Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2009) that conceives of reality as continuously constructed by human beings

in social practices. Within social psychology social constructionism was born as part of the 'linguistic turn' of the discipline in the 1970s and 80s. It constituted a critique against the experimental research design that dominated the field and, according to social constructionists, in removing her from her social, historical and cultural context held too mechanistic and simplistic a view the human being (Gergen, 1973; 2009). Social constructionists also opposed the positivist conviction of the existence of any stable and absolute truth and knowledge that is 'out there', as well as the emphasis that was put on internal, cognitive processes of the human mind. By contrast, social constructionists maintained that what we call 'truth' and 'knowledge' are productions of historically and socio-culturally rooted shared meanings and practices.

The social constructionist school has given birth to a number of research perspectives within social psychology, such as critical social psychology (e.g., Hepburn, 2003), social representation theory (Moscovici, 1961/2008; 1984), some perspectives of narrative psychology (e.g., Gergen & Gergen, 1988), as well as the aforementioned realms of rhetorical psychology (Billig, e.g., 1987; 1988a; 1991), and discursive (e.g., Potter & Wetherell, 1987) and critical discursive psychology (CDP; Edley, 2001; Edley & Wetherell, 1997; Wetherell, 1998). From all these perspectives, discourse is conceived of not as mere language, but as systems of meaning that are constructed through social practices and that at the same time construct social reality (Jokinen, Juhila & Suoninen, 1993; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). In the present study, taking a critical discursive and rhetorical psychological perspective, I thus do not assume that discourse is a reflection of people's 'true' inner selves, attitudes or thoughts. This does not imply that I deny that people have thoughts about themselves and the world around them. Rather, following Michael Billig (1987), I see people's arguing and thinking as inseparable from each other. This also means that I focus on the *action-orientation* and *functionality* of discourse (Billig, 1987; Edley, 2001; Potter & Wetherell, 1987), or, put differently, on what discourse may accomplish in a social and political sense. I focus on 'language *in use'* (Taylor, 2001, p. 6, emphasis added), that is, I am interested in how meaning is constructed, transmitted, and socially accomplished through (political) discourse.

A critical discursive psychological approach conceives of discourse as having a dual character: on the one hand, it enables and constrains individuals' actions, yet, the approach contends, it is also through discourse that individuals may achieve particular social outcomes. I argue that such an approach is particularly fruitful for studying political discourse, as it allows the researcher to explore the ways that historical and ideological matters are reflected in and shape the discourse, and also to elaborate on the social and political outcomes that this socially situated discourse may achieve. It enables the researcher to focus on the politicians' *constructions* of their social reality, and specifically in this dissertation, on the constructions of the nation that they offer to the electorate.

Yet, and as we will see more fully later on, blog-discourse consists of much more than *verbal* constructions. Thus, in this dissertation I extend my comprehension of the term discourse beyond the scope of written text in order to examine how meaning may be constructed and conveyed also through (audio-)visual and digital modes of communication. Study IV focuses specifically on developing a methodological approach that renders it possible to explore all of these elements from a critical social psychological perspective. The approach I propose in this study relies heavily on critical discursive and rhetorical psychological assumptions, yet it includes analytical procedures from the social semiotic studies of images (e.g., Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), and also incorporates sensitivity of the narrative structure (e.g., Gergen & Gergen, 1988) and the digital and communicative elements of political blog-discourse. Such a multi-disciplinary approach allows the researcher to explore the multi-faceted scope of blog-discourse: to see how political arguments may be delivered in the form of emotionally engaging stories or narratives; through vivid, powerful imagery; through hyperlinks that distance the blogger from the argument he or she is delivering; or through collaborative elements whereby the arguments become constructed in a dialogue between the blogger and the readers.

Combining critical discursive and rhetorical perspectives with social semiotic and narrative psychological ones is not without difficulties: the aforementioned two perspectives position themselves as social constructionist, whereas the latter ones to a larger extent focus also on cognitive, 'inner' psychological processes. Nevertheless, a social semiotic approach does conceive of images as being constructions of culturally shared resources, and explores how images may be used in order to serve particular functions (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). The same holds true for the narrative psychological approaches adopted in this study, where the focus is upon the socially embedded and constructive character of narratives (e.g., Bruner, 1991; Gergen & Gergen, 1988). Finally, and crucially, all these approaches take a *critical* scientific stance: they strive to unpack the seemingly neutral and common-sensical contents of verbal, visual and digital constructions, and to highlight how such constructions can function in order to advocate certain values or power structures, and undermine others (e.g., Edley, 2001; Penn, 2010). Thus, despite differences in epistemological assumptions, I shall argue that the approaches nevertheless share important underpinnings that allow them to be purposefully combined for the study of multi-layered (nationalist) blog-discourse.

This doctoral dissertation situates itself at the crossroads of research on radical right and nationalist political discourse, feminist research into gendered aspects of nationalism, discursive research on constructions of ethnic identity, and research on online political communication. As described above, in approaching the topic of populist radical right political blogging I rely methodologically mainly on the perspective of critical discursive psychology, CDP. CDP is one of many critical discourse analytical approaches

that have been utilised for studying political discourse, such as the critical discourse analytical approaches (CDA) developed by Norman and Isabela Fairclough (e.g., Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012) and Teun van Dijk (e.g., van Dijk, 1993b). The present research is, certainly, informed by insights from these discourse analytical perspectives as well (e.g., Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) work on practical reasoning in political argumentation, and van Dijk's (1993a) research on the denial and reversal of racism). Yet, whilst all these approaches have much in common with regards to their focus on the social and political situatedness and constructive nature and rhetorical organisation of discourse, they also differ from each other in terms of their perspectives and assumptions. Fairclough's and Fairclough's CDA, to my understanding, emphasises the critical evaluation of political arguments – are they sustainable to critical questioning or not? Further, like the approach of van Dijk, it does not shy away from making distinctions between external and internal psychological processes.

I will return to a reflection about the difficulties of separating different critical discursive approaches from each other in section 6.2 below. At present, however, I will argue that in comparison with the aforementioned CDA approaches CDP puts a stronger emphasis on the social construction of (political) discourse, and is neither interested in potential cognitive motives behind political argumentation, nor in its logical soundness. Rather, CDP combines macro- with micro-perspectives on discourse, exploring it as part of its broader social and historical context, yet also at the level of immediate social interaction. Consequently, I found CDP especially compatible with my research interests in how the discourse in populist radical right political blogs becomes co-constructed by the politician and his or her readership; in the socially and culturally rooted and rhetorical character of this discourse; and, finally, in the potential (immediate) social and (broader) political functions of the discourse.

Following Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell (1987) I thus view (political) discourse as socially situated and functional; in other words, I view the individual politicians, as well as the specific social and political context they act in as important players in the construction of this discourse, yet at the same time I abide by the idea that the discourse itself constructs that very social world (Edley, 2001). In terms of my interest in nationalist political discourse, I will not attempt to make sense of what accounts of the nation are 'true' as opposed to 'false', but rather, following Reicher and Hopkins (2001a, p. 20) I wish to explore how 'any version of the national past and of national identity serves contemporary interests'. That is, my aim is to study how different versions of nationalism are constructed in the blog accounts, how important the role of social psychological phenomena – such as self-presentation, identity-constructions, discursive divisions between 'ingroups' and 'outgroups', persuasion and appeals to emotions and nostalgic memories – are in these constructions; and how these constructions function to serve the purposes of populist radical right political projects.

My research approach is purely qualitative, which implies that I have no ambitions to generalise my findings in a way that a larger quantitative study would. Rather, what I wish to do is to provide analytical insights into the peculiarities of populist radical right and nationalist political blogging, and to elaborate on its social and political consequences (that may, as I shall discuss in section 6.1 below, indeed have a general character).

The overarching aim of this dissertation is to explore *how blogs can be used as tools for nationalist political communication and persuasion*. The other, more specific aims of this research project can be phrased in the following research questions:

1. What social and political functions may nationalist discourse in political blogs serve? (Studies I, II, III, IV)

2. How is Otherness constructed within anti-immigration discourse in populist radical right political blogs? (Study I)

3. How do female populist radical right politicians negotiate the tension between norms of gender equality and a patriarchal political ideology? (Study II)

4. How do populist radical right politicians with immigrant or other ethnic minority background discursively construct their ethnic identities? (Study III)

5. How can social psychological research grasp the multitude of elements involved in the construction of messages contained in political blogs? (Study IV)

In chapter 5, where I present the main findings of the four sub-studies, I will respond to each of the five questions presented above, bearing the aforementioned overarching aim in mind throughout the chapter. I summarize and evaluate the results, and elaborate further upon their theoretical, empirical and practical implications in the discussion in chapter 6. In the next chapter, however, I will first describe the research material and methods of analysis in more detail.

4 MATERIAL AND METHODS

4.1 MATERIAL

This dissertation consists of four separate sub-studies. Study II was single-authored by myself. Studies I an IV were authored by Inari Sakki and myself, and study III by Karmela Liebkind, Inari Sakki and myself. Thus, from now on I shall use 'I' when referring to the author of study II, and 'we' when referring to the authors of studies I, III and IV.[4]

The material for this research project consists of entries from political blogs by members of the FP and the SD. The material, in contrast for instance to interview material, is what Potter and Hepburn (2005) would call 'naturalistic'. There are a number of advantages with using such material for the purposes of the present research project. Potter and Hepburn (2005) identify several – amendable as well as unavoidable – problems related to using interviews in qualitative research. For example, the authors highlight how the interactional character of the research setting, the interests and stake of the interviewer, and the shifting positions or *footings* (Goffman, 1981) of both the interviewer and interviewee have implications for how the interview proceeds and thus for the analytical conclusions that may be drawn from the material. Without questioning the value of interview-based qualitative research I wish to emphasise that such aspects are especially important to consider when the potential interviewees are radical right politicians, as in the present study. Indeed, in analysing the politicians' independently authored blog-entries, rather than interviews planned and carried out by myself, I have been able to avoid imposing my own interests and expectations on the politicians, and instead focus on discourse that they produce without my involvement, that is, on discourse that occurs 'naturally'. This is not to say, however, that my research interests are not reflected in my research questions and analytical interpretations – they certainly are. Yet, my choice of material removes the risk of me directly steering the politicians to respond to specific questions raised by me as a specific category-member, for example, as a researcher. I will return to a reflection on the benefits and limitations of using blog-material in section 6.2 below.

Each of the sub-studies in this dissertation focuses on different sets of material that were collected based upon the study-specific research questions

[4] A simpler solution would have been for me to present the analyses in passive voice. The use of passive voice is, however, not recommended by the American Psychological Association (2009, p. 77), and it is especially unsuitable for presenting (critical) discursive research, where the role of the researcher and his or her subjectivity is especially central throughout the research process. Thus, despite it being uncommon practice to do so, I have chosen to use both 'I' and 'we' in this dissertation, hoping thereby not to confuse the reader excessively.

outlined in the previous section (3.4). All blog-entries were written between the years 2007 and 2015, a period that captures the time preceding and following the national electoral successes of the SD (2010) and the FP (2011), as well as the European 'refugee crisis' in 2015. After having analysed the blog-entries, I – being a native speaker of Swedish and fluent in Finnish – translated them from their original language (Finnish or Swedish) into English. In so doing, I strived to retain idiomatic expressions and linguistic idiosyncrasies as much as possible, and explained their meaning in English where necessary (e.g., the expression 'lady in a flowery hat', '*kukkahattutäti*', on p. 47 below). The material of the separate sub-studies are summarized in Table 1 below[5].

4.1.1 STUDY I: BLOGS OF EXTREME ANTI-IMMGRATION POLITICIANS

The material for Study I derives from nine blogs written by politicians who met the criteria of, first, having publicly proclaimed a strong anti-immigration stance, and second, being members of the national parliament and thus in a position of significant power and societal influence in their respective countries. At the time of data-collection (2013-2014) four FP and five SD-members fulfilled these criteria. The four Finnish bloggers (James Hirvisaari[6], Olli Immonen, Jussi Halla-aho and Juho Eerola) had signed the anti-immigration manifesto *Nuiva vaalimanifesti*[7] and held backgrounds in the extreme nationalist group called *Suomen Sisu* ('Finnish Determination'); two of them have been convicted of hate-speech (Sundqvist, 2012). Halla-aho is considered the ideological leader of the Finnish radical right and anti-immigration movement, and has also been quoted on the web pages of international counter-jihadists.

All five Swedish bloggers (Markus Wiechel, Richard Jomshof, Thoralf Alfsson[8], Kent Ekeroth and Mattias Karlsson) had attracted attention in the public debate for their aggressive criticism of Islam, and two of them had been accused of hate-speech (Barr, 2013). One of the five, Mattias Karlsson, has

[5] The blog-entries varied significantly in terms of their length and style: whilst together amounting to some hundreds of pages, some entries were very short, containing one or two sentences or links, while others were long essay-like entries. Calculating and reporting the exact number of blog-entries thus says little about their content and width. Instead, the number of studied *blogs* provides a better understanding of the scope of the material.

[6] As a consequence of the so-called Nazi salute scandal, which took place in October 2013 in the Finnish Parliament, Hirvisaari was expelled from the FP, yet he retained his seat in parliament as a member of the parliamentary group Change 2011.

[7] At the time of writing (October 2016) the list of names of those who have signed the manifesto is no longer available online.

[8] Thoralf Alfsson was not among the SD's candidates for the 2014 parliamentary elections, yet retains his place in the local council of Kalmar.

hugely influenced the ideological development of the SD, having acted as the party's deputy leader in 2014-2015 (Sköld & Eriksson, 2014), and having been in charge of formulating, for example, the party's 2011 programme of principles (Widfeldt, 2015). The specific blog-entries selected for analysis in this study were based on the topics of discussion – either immigration, multiculturalism or Islam – and the time of writing, namely 2008 to 2013.

4.1.2 STUDY II: BLOGS OF FEMALE POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT POLITICIANS

I collected the material for Study II from blogs of three female SD and FP politicians, respectively. I chose the bloggers on the bases that they possessed considerable political influence (either as MP's or members of the party executive) and that they were active bloggers. The Swedish bloggers were Paula Bieler, MP and member of the party executive; Carina Herrstedt, MP and vice president of the SD; and Therese Borg, member of the party executive. The Finnish bloggers were Riikka Slunga-Poutsalo, party secretary; Maria Lohela, MP[9]; and Laura Huhtasaari, MP. Thus, at the time when the study was conducted, the female SD and FP politicians whose discourse I examined held corresponding positions of power in their respective parties. The criteria for the selection of texts for this study were that the topics of discussion were related to gender and femininity – discussing gender equality, feminism, sexual minority rights and the position and rights of women – and the time of writing (2007 to 2014).

4.1.3 STUDY III: BLOGS OF POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT POLITICIANS WITH IMMIGRANT OR OTHER ETHNIC MINORITY BACKGROUND

The discourse examined in Study III is of politicians who met the criteria, first, of being of immigrant or other ethnic minority background, and second, of being active bloggers at the time of data collection. We were unable to find any FP-politicians fulfilling these criteria (see section 6.2 below for a discussion of this limitation), yet we found four SD-politicians that did. The first was MP Paula Bieler (also included in Study II) whose parents were Polish immigrants to Sweden. The second was Nima Gholam Ali Pour[10], a local SD-politician who came to Sweden as an Iranian refugee at the age of six. The third blogger was Camilla Jonasson[11], who during the conducting of the study (2015) was active

[9] In 2015 Maria Lohela became Speaker of the Finnish parliament.

[10] Nima Gholam Ali Pour's blog had been removed in the autumn 2015. However, his blog writings have been transferred to sites such as Samtiden.nu and lab.exponerat.net.

[11] In July 2015, Camilla Jonasson resigned from her activities in the SD.

in the board of the SD's youth organisation and one of the actors in the party's 2014 campaign film. She was adopted from South Korea as a child. The fourth blogger was Ilona Michalowski, a local SD-politician who was born in Kazakhstan in the former Soviet Union and immigrated to Sweden from Ukraine as an adult. Our aim was to analyse the entries where the bloggers discussed their ethnic identity in connection to their political affiliation and the political debate on immigration in Sweden. We identified the accounts relating to this topic by searching for keywords such as immigration, immigration politics, immigrant, ethnic minority, Sweden Democrat(s), Swede and Swedish. All blog-entries were written between 2010 and 2014, covering the time during which both of the disputed parliamentary campaign-films of the SD were launched (see section 3.2 above).

4.1.4 STUDY IV: TWO NATIONALIST POLITICAL BLOG-ENTRIES

In order to realize the methodological endeavour of Study IV – to propose how the multifaceted and also non-verbal political messages in blogs may be analysed – we here chose to focus on a small set of material, but one that was nevertheless rich in terms of the complexity of its discourse. We chose the material based on the following criteria. We wished, first, to study nationalist political appeals during a time of societal and political rupture, thus, we sought for nationalist blog-entries written during the 'refugee crisis' of 2015. Our second aim was to demonstrate the rich array of ways that political messages may be expressed through blogs. Thus, we chose blog-entries that captured the two 'extremes' of this continuum, and that in this sense were illustrative of the material used in the other sub-studies. The first entry we chose was structured as a traditional narrative, whilst the other constituted a prime example of how fragmented and multi-layered the discourse in political blogs can be. We furthermore wanted to emphasize the impact that discourse contained in political blogs may have on the societal and political debate in a country at large. Thus, we chose blog-writings of politicians who have become especially (in)famous in their respective countries because of their arguments against immigration and multiculturalism. The bloggers that, in our view, best corresponded to this description were Olli Immonen, MP of the FP, and Thoralf Alfsson, former MP of the SD. The two politicians are publicly known for their blatant hostility towards immigration and multiculturalism: Immonen's statements led to his exemption from the FP parliamentary group in 2015, and Alfsson's have rendered him being accused of hate-speech. The blogs of both politicians reach large readerships[12], and their writings have frequently been quoted, discussed, praised and criticised in both social and mainstream media. In choosing to concentrate on only two single blog-entries

[12] According to the statistics on Alfsson's blog, the blog receives approximately 50,000 unique visitors monthly. Immonen's blog displays no visitor statistics, but 5,800 people like it on Facebook.

by these politicians we were able, first, to show the analyses of the entire blog-entries from beginning to end, including all their verbal and non-verbal elements; and second, to thoroughly demonstrate how the analytical steps we proposed could be taken.

Table 1 *Materials used in sub-studies I, II, III and IV*

Studies	Bloggers	Time-period	Number of blogs (N)	Topics
I	Extreme anti-immigration (male) MP's from the FP and SD	2008-13	9 (4 FP, 5 SD)	immigration, multiculturalism, Islam
II	Female politicians from the SD and FP	2007-14	6 (3 FP, 3 SD)	gender, femininity, gender equality, feminism, sexual minority rights, position and rights of women
III	SD politicians with ethnic minority background	2010-14	4 SD	immigration, immigration politics, immigrant, ethnic minority, Sweden Democrat(s), Swede, Swedish
IV	1 FP and 1 (former) SD MP	2015	2 (1 FP, 1 SD)	The 2015 'refugee crisis'

4.2 METHODS OF ANALYSIS

The main analytical approach of this research project relies on work in critical discursive psychology (CDP) (Edley, 2001; Wetherell, 1998) presented in section 3.4 above. The epistemological assumptions of CDP stem from the social constructionist (Burr, 2003; Gergen, 2009) view of reality as continuously constructed by human beings in social contexts and through social practices, such as discourse. CDP is not a unified research approach, but one that draws inspiration from both discursive (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) and rhetorical (Billig, 1987; 1988a; 1991) psychology. As discussed in section 3.4 above, CDP strives to unpack the complex relationship between the individual and the discourse in viewing individuals simultaneously as productions and producers of discourse (Edley, 2001). It conceives of discourse as a production of its historical and societal contexts (Edley, 2001), as well as of its particular argumentative context, that is, it is interested in what alternatives the discourse is arguing against (Billig,

1987). Moreover, the perspective takes into account the social and political consequences that the discursive patterns might have (Wetherell, 1998). In other words, CDP allows for the critical social psychological examination of discourse at both a macro (societal) and micro (interactional) level. Accordingly, I found the approach of CDP especially suitable for the purposes of the present research-project: to explore how historically and culturally embedded resources are reflected in exclusionary nationalist discursive constructions, and how such constructions may serve the functions of political mobilisation and a deepening of 'us and them' divisions. In terms of research practices the approach of CDP thus not only enables, but in fact obliges the researcher 'go outside the data' when conducting analyses. Doing so, my aim in this dissertation was to explore the discursive patterns of the blog-entries; how they were constructed, as well as what social and political consequences the discursive patterns might have. Thus, the analysis focused on the rhetorical content, form and functions of the discourse in the political blogs.

The analytical procedure in each sub-study involved three distinct, yet intertwined stages, and the analysis moved back and forth through them as it proceeded. In the first stage I (we) read the material multiple times in order to identify the patterns, that is, the consistency and variability within and between accounts in the material (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The patterns in this case were the ways in which the bloggers talked about issues relating to immigration and multiculturalism (Study I), notions of gender and femininity (Study II), their own identities (Study III) or the nation (Study IV) in their accounts. In Study IV analyses of the narrative sequencing (e.g., Bruner, 1991; Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Greimas & Courtes, 1979), the literal or denotive meanings (Barthes, 1977) of the (audio-)visual elements (e.g., the colours, composition and placement of the images; the relationship between the displayed actors and the viewers; cf. Jewitt & Oyama, 2001; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), as well as the prevalence of hyperlinks and communicative elements were included in the analysis of content.

After this initial stage, I (we) set out to explore in detail how these discursive patterns were socially constructed and rhetorically organised. More specifically, the focus was upon what discursive resources, that is, conversational practices, rhetorical commonplaces and liberal principles (Potter, 2012; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) the bloggers drew upon when constructing and negotiating, for instance, their own identities in relation to that of the Other, or notions of gender and national belonging. In addition, our interest lay in what rhetorical strategies and devices, such as consensus warranting and disclaimers, (e.g. Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Potter, 1996; Verkuyten, 2013) the bloggers made use of in their discourse. In Study IV, we also analysed the expressive meanings and associations, that is, the connotations (Barthes, 1977) that the (audio-)visual material took in the context of the blog-entry, and the ways in which the visual elements contributed to the rhetorical work of blog's verbal content (Blair, 2004; Hill, 2004). Further, we examined how the blogs' digital and communicative

elements, such as hyperlinks (Silva, 2016) and possibilities for blogger-reader interactions (Baumer et al., 2011), contributed to the construction of the message.

Finally, in acknowledging that individuals in general – and politicians in particular – express themselves in order to achieve certain argumentative and persuasive outcomes (Billig, 1987; 1991; Potter and Wetherell, 1987), I (we) abided by Michael Billig's (1988) emphasis on the importance of examining political discourse within its argumentative context. In this study, the argumentative context of each individual blog-entry is understood in a dual sense: on the one hand, it refers to which particular counter-argument I (we) interpreted the entry to oppose, and to the ways in which the blogger strived to increase the persuasive power of his or her argument; and on the other, it refers to the broader societal and/or political debate that the blog-entry participated in. Thus, when analysing the blog-entries, I (we) elaborated on both their immediate social, as well as their broader societal discursive functions. In Study IV we concomitantly elaborated on how the concrete (denotation) and associative (connotation) meanings of the (audio-)visual material became tied together in ideological or 'mythical' layers of meaning (e.g., nationalism, freedom, Finnishness) (Barthes, 1977). In line with the goals of the critical approach to discourse this study adheres to, the aim of these analyses, in sum, was to illuminate what consequences the blog-texts might have in a social and political sense.

5 FINDINGS: THE POWERFUL DISCOURSE CONTAINED IN POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT POLITICAL BLOGS

In this chapter I summarise the main findings of the four sub-studies, concentrating on research questions 1 to 5 presented in section 3.4 above, and will proceed in the following chapter to discuss the overarching question of how blogs can be used as tools for nationalist political communication and persuasion. The detailed analyses of the blog-entries and the original results are presented in the separate articles (I, II, III, IV). In the present chapter I focus on compiling the main discursive patterns of the studied blogs, relating and comparing the patterns to each other when relevant. As I will attempt to demonstrate, the blog-writings of the male extreme anti-immigration politicians, the female politicians and the politicians with immigrant or other ethnic minority background shared many common themes and features, yet were in important aspects different from one another.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, in section 5.1 I present the exclusionary nationalist argumentation that occurred within blog-entries that explicitly discussed immigration, multiculturalism and Islam. I move on to the discourse that displayed more ambivalence and nuance: in section 5.2.1 I focus on how the themes of gender equality, feminism, and cultural differences and exclusion based on notions of gender were discussed, and in section 5.2.2 I present the discourse in which ethnic identities and borders of national belonging were constructed. Finally, in section 5.3 I investigate the peculiarities of the discourse contained in populist radical right political blogs. As will become clear, the different discursive patterns overlap to a large extent, and are separated under the headings below for the sake of clarity. Throughout the presentation of the findings I elaborate on the discursive content, form and function of the bloggers accounts, as described in section 4.2 above.

5.1 THE DISCOURSE OF OTHERNESS IN FP AND SD POLITICAL BLOGS

In study I and IV we analysed discourse contained in the political blogs of extreme anti-immigration MP's of the FP and SD, with the aim of studying how Otherness and notions of national exclusion and inclusion were discursively constructed. Through critical discursive and rhetorical psychological analyses of the blog accounts we found that Otherness was built in three distinct ways in both the Finnish and the Swedish material. The similarity of these discursive constructions across both sets of material was rather surprising, given the differences in the immigration and asylum policies

in the countries at the time (2008-2013). Moreover, the anti-immigration blog discourse was to a large extent constructed through rhetorical and discursive strategies that are familiar from previous research on radical right discourse in other, more traditional fora. Despite these observations we shall see that exclusionary nationalism was argued for by the use of somewhat different discursive resources in the two countries, and, importantly, that political blogs do provide particular features and tools with which nationalist and anti-immigration aims may be expressed differently than within traditional media – a topic I return to in section 5.4 below.

The first way in which Otherness was constructed in the anti-immigration blog-writings was through the depiction of the Other, typically Muslims and Africans, in terms of difference, deviance and threat. This representation of the Other as a *deviant group of people* was rhetorically rationalised by the bloggers through the use of crime and rape statistics (e.g., Wood & Finlay, 2008), explicit, precise and specific negative information (e.g., Potter, 1996), as well as costs of immigration as discursive resources (e.g., van Dijk, 1992; 1993a). That is, violations of the norms of the dominant culture and individual crimes committed by immigrants or Muslims were described as standing for a threat posed by a group as a whole (cf. e.g., Billig, 1987; van Dijk, 1993a; Wood & Finlay, 2008). Here, the Finnish and Swedish discourses differed somewhat from each other: the FP bloggers mostly exploited 'warning' examples from abroad, often from Sweden or another Nordic country, whereas the SD bloggers typically referred to their readers' shared knowledge of individual crimes committed by the Other. Moreover, a common theme in both sets of material, but even more dominant in the Swedish one, was the juxtaposition between immigration and multiculturalism with the maintenance of the Nordic welfare system: 'if we allow the former ones, we must abandon the latter' (cf. e.g., Norocel, 2016; Pyrhönen, 2015).

The second representation, which we call a *threatening ideology*, exploited liberal arguments (e.g., human rights) and Western culture (e.g., gender equality) as discursive resources, and relied heavily on cultural essentialist ideas of incompatible cultural differences that constitute a threat to one's nation and group identity (cf. Hopkins et al., 1997; Verkuyten, 2003; 2013).[13] The bloggers went to great lengths to warn their readers about the dangers of Islam and its incompatibility with Western, liberal and gender-equal culture, and to call for action against it. The supposed threat of Islam was increased by exaggerating the outgroup's presence and great numbers, that is, the 'Islamization' of Finnish and Swedish societies. Again, however, these patterns were different in the Finnish as compared with the Swedish discourse: the

[13] The social psychological theory of integrated threat (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) distinguishes between realistic (physical, concrete) and symbolic (immaterial, e.g., related to values and norms) forms of threat between groups. In the present study, the first representation of immigrants as competing with the majority population resembles the former, realistic kind of threat, whereas the second one that focuses on the cultural threat of Islam is more akin to the latter, symbolic type of threat.

former discourse was characterised by cautionary examples from abroad (often from Sweden) and apocalyptic formulations about a gruesome future, whereas the latter, by contrast, was dominated by references to a threat that is already present: the ongoing 'Islamization' in Sweden and the Swedish immigration policy with its detrimental effects.

The third and final representation, that of *inner enemies*, focused not only on excluding immigrants and Muslims from the national ingroup, but also the Other amongst us (cf. e.g., Finlay, 2007; Goodman & Johnson, 2014; Mols & Jetten, 2014; Wood & Finlay, 2008). Here, the Other, typically (female) political opponents, leftist and green politicians, feminists and defenders of multiculturalism, were portrayed as unpatriotic traitors to the nation. This, in turn, enabled the ingroup, the FP and the SD, to present themselves as victimised martyrs and as defenders of the Finnish and Swedish nations and their peoples. In the construction of this representation the bloggers presented the protection and preservation of national symbols and concepts (cf. Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b) as incompatible with immigration and multiculturalism. The contrast between the FP's populist-agrarian roots and the SD's past in extreme-right movements was also reflected in this representation of Otherness: the FP bloggers frequently referred to their belonging to the hard-working 'ordinary Finns', whereas the SD bloggers distanced themselves from and accused the Other of Nazism.

A further common way in which the blog-accounts were structured was in the form of storylines relying on the notion of *temporality* as a discursive resource (cf. Condor, 2006; Jovchelovitch, 2002): everything was better before (multiculturalism), and everything will be better if we stop 'multiculturalisation' from going on. In all three representations of Otherness, Finnish politicians referred to Sweden, the country more experienced with immigration, as a warning example of what will happen if multiculturalism is allowed to 'go too far', whereas the Swedish politicians presented the threat of Islam and the societal unrest that immigration causes as 'already in the making'. Members of both parties, moreover, relied heavily on using nostalgic and collective memories in their discourse as a means of arguing against multiculturalism (e.g., Mols & Jetten, 2014; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b). The way nostalgia was used, however, depended highly on the context: the FP politicians drew upon the 19th century formation of the Finnish nation, and above all, upon the *spirit of the Winter War* that unites the ('true') Finns against the forces of multiculturalism. Thus, they created a binary opposition between the benefits of such manifestations of national unity and homogeneity, on the one hand, and the costs of multiculturalism, on the other. The Finnish bloggers, moreover, constructed the dangerousness of the inner Other through drawing parallels between present-day multicultural policies and the Soviet or Communist threat of the past. This discursive pattern reflects Finland's history with, proximity to and continued complex relationship with its big neighbour Russia. Radical right politicians in post-communist countries have indeed been shown to exploit similar rhetoric, for

example in Hungary (Woodley, 2013) where political opponents such as Socialists are labelled as communists, and in Romania (Mădroane, 2013), where EU-positive political measures are compared with the Soviet occupation.

The SD bloggers, in turn, nostalgically yearned back to and wished to restore the *folkhem*, when Swedish welfare was still meant for Swedes and Swedes alone (Studies I and IV). Typically, Social Democrats, who are known as the creators of the *folkhem*, were accused of abandoning it, whereas the SD were depicted as its sole remaining protectors, and as the only ones who still realise that it requires national homogeneity. Also not absent from the Finnish material, the discursive pattern of juxtaposing welfare with multiculturalism or immigration reflects the Nordic, and especially Swedish, context and its reputation as 'cradle of social welfare', and is to be understood precisely in the light of the fact that the Nordic welfare model was introduced before larger scale immigration to the region began. Thus, despite the 'leftist' connotation of the notion of the welfare system (Coontz, 1992), contrasting this 'harmonious' period of relative ethnic homogeneity with the 'rupture' that immigration has entailed, seems to be a fruitful way for the Finnish and especially the Swedish populist radical right bloggers to argue against a multicultural society (cf. Norocel, 2016; Pyrhönen, 2015).

In summary, through conveying their arguments in the form of socially recognised storylines with the potential to emotionally engage the readers (László, 2002); and through drawing parallels to carefully selected moments in the nations' histories (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b), both the Finnish and Swedish politicians strove to appeal to their readers and invite them to join in their present fight against multiculturalism. Indeed, Törrönen (2000) has demonstrated that political arguments delivered i narrative form have an especially persuasive appeal, as they superimpose their version of the world on that of the audience, thus motivating the audience to act towards a future goal advocated by the politician. Similarly, as Reicher and Hopkins (2001b, p. 150) put it: 'The past is powerful in defining contemporary identity because it is represented in terms of a narrative structure which invites those in the present to see themselves as participants in an ongoing drama'.

In order to elaborate on the voter-mobilizing potential of these three representations of Otherness, it seems that that of inner enemies was the most crucial one in this regard, as it served two important discursive functions. First, it created a victimised ingroup position: 'we (the FP or SD and others that oppose immigration) are the true victims of racism'. Second, it refined the category of the ingroup, from people who oppose immigration to covering 'the people', and extended the outgroup to include immigrants and proponents of multiculturalism. Not only did these functions reverse the racist label and thus serves to scapegoat the Other as being racist and unpatriotic, but also, in particular in case of the SD, they allowed the ingroup to distance itself from its own extreme past and reputation (cf. Goodman & Johnson, 2014). In sum, they created an image of the ingroup as the good, average Finnish/Swedish

people, who are the only true defenders of the nation, and who invites the readers to join them (cf., Rapley, 1998; Rooyackers & Verkuyten, 2012). In line with what Reicher and colleagues (2008) suggest in their Five-Step Social Identity Model of the development of collective hate, this construction of the ingroup as good and virtuous in combination with the outgroup as evil and threatening creates an impression that hostility towards the latter is not only warranted, but in fact morally sound. Figure 1 below provides an example of a Finnish blog-entry that depicts precisely such a contrast between a 'harmonious' past of national homogeneity and the ills of present-day multiculturalism (Study IV).

Figure 1 Finnish anti-multiculturalism blog-entry.

5.2 'WE ARE NO POLITICAL ALIBIS' – WOMEN AND IMMIGRANTS WITHIN THE POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT

With regards to the discourse of female populist radical right politicians (Study II) and populist radical right politicians with immigrant or other ethnic minority background (Study III), my research shows that this discourse carries notable similarities to, yet is in many ways different from that of their white, male colleagues that I studied. Echoing what was described above, these politicians also depicted immigrant (typically Muslim) men as rapists and criminals, and Islam as a threatening ideology, drawing upon notions of gender equality and women's rights in order to contrast the gender culture of Islam to that of Sweden and Finland. This discursive pattern resembles Said's (1978) notion of an orientalist discourse, where white (Swedish and Finnish) women are constructed as the victims of the sexualized violence committed by the invading 'Other' man (cf. Blee, 2007; Koonz, 1987). A further similarity pertains to the prototype of the inner enemy, the (female) anti-racist, multiculturalist, feminist or left-winger (e.g., Rooyackers & Verkuyten, 2012; Wood & Finlay, 2008), personified in what is pejoratively called 'ladies in flowery hats' (*kukkahattutädit*)[14] in Finland, and in the (female) Social Democrats and the 'wrong kind of feminists' in Sweden, as I will further discuss below. These discourses capture the paradoxical way in which the nationalist discourse of the SD and FP is gendered: white women are depicted as both innocent victims and despised advocators of a multicultural society.

However, the discourse of both the female politicians and those with immigrant or other ethnic minority background certainly carried features that set it apart from such 'typical' radical right discourse. The latter politicians not only accused their inner enemies of failed immigration policies, but could also draw upon their ethnic minority belonging in order to accuse political opponents (and other immigrants) of discriminating against them because of the political choices they have made – precisely because of this belonging (section 5.2.2 below). With regards to the female politicians (section 5.2.1 below), a central element of their discourse was their depiction of themselves as the only ones genuinely interested in protecting the Other immigrant (Muslim) woman, who in turn was portrayed as a victim of the suppressive gender culture of Islam. This feature has been called *care racism* by Mulinari and Neergaard (2014, p. 52) 'where "they" are regarded as a monolithic group without individuality, and where "we" have responsibility for "our" migrants'. Most importantly, nevertheless, what characterised the discourse of both these groups of politicians was how ambivalences – between norms of gender

[14] The FP have coined this term for stereotypically referring to white, well educated women who hold a position of power in society or politics and actively support multiculturalism (Keskinen, 2011; 2013; Mulinari & Neergaard, 2012; Norocel, 2013). The term bears a derogatory and ridiculing connotation: these women are accused of naively and blindly supporting (male) immigrants at the cost of the good of their 'own' people.

equality and a patriarchal politics in the case of the female politicians (Study II), and between an ethnic minority or immigrant versus an anti-immigration political identity in the case of the politicians with immigrant or other ethnic minority background (Study III) – were discursively negotiated. As we shall see, these negotiations could serve distinct social and political functions.

5.2.1 DILEMMAS OF FEMINISM AND PATRIARCHY

As Cristian Norocel (2013, p. 156) notes, being simultaneously a woman and a politician seems to go counter to the populist radical right ideology, since women in so doing abandon their designated role within the patriarchal, heteronormative family structure that such parties advocate. Beverly Skeggs (1997), in turn, maintains that the categorised positions we hold (in terms of class, race, gender etc.) determine how we construct our subjectivities and our view of the social world. Inspired by these assumptions, I set out to investigate the little explored question of how women negotiate the contradictory position of being a woman in a Nordic country, where gender equality is regarded as 'common-place' (Billig, 1987; Holli, 2003; Keskinen, 2013), yet simultaneously being active in a party that stands for white male heterosexual privilege and cherishes traditional gender roles (De los Reyes et al., 2003; Fekete, 2006). From this extraordinary position, how do they construct and use the notions of gender and femininity[15]? How do they understand and negotiate the populist radical right ideology of gendered nationalism (cf. chapter 3.2.1)?

My analysis of female populist radical right politicians' blog discourse discussing gender and femininity showed that this discourse was indeed highly ambivalent. The discourse was characterized by an ideological dilemma (Billig et al., 1988) that I called *feminism versus patriarchy*. This dilemma stems from the tension between the normative value of gender equality on the one hand, and the obligation to abide by the patriarchal party ideology, on the other. It was most prevalent in the discourses, or *interpretative repertoires*[16]

[15] Following Skeggs (1997, pg. 98) I approach the concept of femininity as a process that shapes the way in which 'women are gendered and become specific sorts of women'. I see the notion of gender as a social construction (e.g., Burr 2003; Gergen 2009), produced and reproduced by human beings in specific social and historical contexts, and determining what it means to be male or female or intersex.

[16] While 'discourse' is a common term, often used simply when referring to talk or text, the relationship between the terms 'discourse' and 'interpretative repertoire' is somewhat ambiguous, and they are indeed often used as synonyms. In their classic book *Discourse and social psychology* (1987, p. 138) Potter and Wetherell define interpretative repertoires as 'a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events'. In Edley's (2001, p. 198) words, interpretative repertoires are 'relatively coherent ways of talking about objects and events in the world'; '"building blocks of conversation", a range of linguistic resources that can be drawn upon and utilized in the course of everyday social interaction.' Edley contends that the concept of discourse is very much akin

(cf. Edley, 2001; Potter & Wetherell, 1987) that, first, argued against affirmative action for women and minorities and for maintaining traditional, heteronormative gender roles; and second, that aimed at scapegoating feminists and female political opponents. The prevalence of this dilemma and how it was negotiated revealed not only differences between the 'female' and 'male' discourses that I studied, but also between those of the Finnish and Swedish female politicians.

The FP and SD women devoted a vast amount of blog-space to explaining the low percentage of women in the parties, and to justifying their own political choices. The underrepresentation of women in the FP was described as a consequence of the media's lack of interest in the women in the party, whereas the reason given by the SD-women was that the scapegoating of the SD and the attacks directed at their members scare women away. This difference reflects well the different treatment the parties receive by political opponents and the media alike in their respective countries. All bloggers, however, presented their parties as the only truly gender equal ones, where everyone gets treated as an individual and not according to gender. The women also emphasized that joining the party was a result of their own independent will, and dodged any accusations of being exploited by the party in order for it to appear women-friendly. These claims were one way in which the female politicians discursively tackled the *feminism versus patriarchy* dilemma.

A feature that distinguished the Finnish and Swedish discourses from each other was the Finnish bloggers' depiction of differences between genders as natural or given by god – a theme that was much less prevalent in among the Swedish ones. These depictions represented the patriarchal party ideology that sees heteronormative gender roles as a fundamental pillar of society, but were nevertheless discursively framed according to the standards of a modern, gender equal society: the differences allegedly maintain harmony and are even desirable.

As discussed in section 2.2 above, the argument that gender equality is 'accomplished' and requires no further efforts can be forcefully used to counter feminist voices about prevailing inequalities (e.g., Lockwood Harris et al., 2012; Norocel, 2016). Such discourse was employed by both the FP and SD women in order to argue against structural measures for enhancing women's position in the labour market. As a result, the ideological dilemma of *feminism versus patriarchy* was efficiently negotiated without the need for statements that appeared patriarchal to women on the one hand, or went counter to the party ideology, on the other. My study thus confirms previous findings that

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to these meanings, and similarly tied to the concept of ideology. Distinguishing between the concepts may be a matter of how they are understood in different disciplines: in so-called Focauldian discourse analysis that focuses on relations of power and dominance, the concept of discourse acquires a meaning related to how macro-level institutionalised discourses impact upon the human subject (Edley, 2001, p. 201). Interpretative repertoires, in turn, carry a less consolidated meaning, and are more connected with the micro-level at which human beings, as active agents, may flexibly use them in their everyday talk.

populist radical right politicians use the notion of gender equality as a border between 'us' and 'them', where 'they' may flexibly refer either to political opponents who propose measures for enhancing gender equality, as discussed here, or when essentialising and othering the 'misogynist' Islamic culture, as discussed in section 5.1 above (cf. De los Reyes, Molina & Mulinari, 2003; Holli, 2003; Horsti, 2016; Keskinen, 2013; Keskinen et al., 2009; Mulinari & Neergaard, 2014; Norocel, 2013; 2016; Tuori, 2007). As my results illustrate, these arguments were put forward by populist radical right politicians regardless of gender.

When discussing feminism the female bloggers did not elaborate on different feminist movements and ideologies; rather, they expressed suspicion and even hostility towards 'feminism' in general. However, even though a vast amount of the Swedish discourse was devoted to charges against feminists and gender scholars, these discursive attacks were much more dilemmatic than the blatant opposition to and distancing from feminism in the Finnish material. In this discursive context a way for the Swedish bloggers to navigate between the Scylla and Charybdis of *feminism versus patriarchy* was, intriguingly, to position themselves and present their arguments, not as Sweden Democrats, but as the 'right kind of feminists'. These feminists resist 'derogatory' affirmative action for women in the labour market, and wish to 'liberate' Muslim women from their subordination by men; unlike the 'wrong kind of feminists' that waste time on irrelevant or harmful matters such as promoting gender-neutral politics and measures to enhance the position of women in the labour market. The Finnish bloggers, by contrast, did not go through similar extensive rhetorical work, but simply dismissed feminists as male-haters. Overall, discourse aimed at scapegoating feminists, maintaining traditional, heteronormative gender roles and arguing against gay marriage and adoption rights was far less ambiguous in the FP as compared with the SD material.

The discourse of the FP women indicates that the Finnish long-lasting societal suspicion of feminism, illustrated in the common saying 'I do support gender equality, but I am not a feminist' (Holli, 2003, p. 16) persists. The discourse of the SD, on the other hand, reflects the power of the feminist norm in Swedish society: it is simply much less politically accepted to say that you oppose it. Consequentially, and borrowing terminology from studies of intergroup relations, the Swedish female politicians were forced to 'subtype' (e.g., Barreto & Ellemers, 2003) the category of feminists into 'favourable' and 'non-favourable' ones, and could then place themselves within the former sub-category. Their Finnish colleagues could instead more lightly resist the feminist category completely (cf. Ellemers, et al., 2002). Nevertheless, the discursive functions of the Swedish and Finnish bloggers' discourses were similar: in both cases, the patriarchal and even misogynist label normally attached to the blogger's ingroup (the SD or FP) was removed and transferred to their antagonists, that is, to (the wrong kind of) feminists, political opponents and the Islamic community. In other words, the function was to produce a *reversal of misogyny* (cf. the concept of 'reversal of racism', e.g.,

van Dijk, 1993a). My analyses, in sum, suggest that the dilemma of *feminism versus patriarchy* was remarkably more problematic for the SD than for the FP women, and that this difference provides an intriguing illustration of how inseparable (political) discourse is from its surrounding societal and political context (cf. Billig, 1987; Edley, 2001; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a).

5.2.2 (IN)COMPATIBLE ETHNIC IDENTITIES

Being an immigrant or ethnic minority member in an anti-immigration party seems like a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, the SD politicians with immigrant or other ethnic minority background whose blogs we studied oftentimes did not touch upon this background at all, but included themselves in an unproblematic way in the category of 'Swedes'. Yet, a closer examination of their accounts revealed that their ethnic identity constructions were by no means always straightforward. Rather, the discourse was also characterised by a complex shifting between ethnic majority and minority identifications, at an assigned, external level as well as on an asserted, more personal level (Berbrier, 2008; Merino & Tileagă, 2011). Such navigations between different identities could take place even within the same blog-entry.

A significant amount of the blog-accounts of the populist radical right politicians with immigrant or other ethnic minority background was devoted to the discursive tension between an assigned immigrant or ethnic minority identity on the one hand, and an asserted Swedish identity, on the other. One way of solving this tension was for the bloggers to make a distinction between an ethnic minority identity and a personally claimed national and cultural majority one. More commonly, the bloggers accepted an ethnic minority identity at a level of *being* and *knowing*: they established the inevitable matter-of-factness of being an ethnic minority member through drawing upon origin, biological traits and physical appearance as discursive resources (cf. Verkuyten & de Wolf, 2002). Yet, at the more personal level of *feeling, doing*, and *wanting*, they resisted this identity. For example, the bloggers could actively claim a majority Swedish identity and resist a minority one through drawing upon their early socialisation, their love and pride for Sweden and their free will as discursive resources.

A rarer discursive pattern among the bloggers involved the construction of an asserted, deeper sense not only of a majority identity, but of a simultaneously and equally actively claimed minority one. Referring to *wanting,* that is, to their independent free will, when constructing different identities and positions for themselves and motivating their political choices, was a salient pattern not only in the discourse of the bloggers with immigrant or other ethnic minority background, but, as discussed in the previous section, also in that of the female bloggers. Here we must acknowledge that these identities and positions were being claimed in the context of political

discourse, where demonstrating one's capacity to make deliberate personal choices can be even more important than in everyday talk.

Viewed from a critical discursive psychological perspective the ethnic identity-constructions described above served distinct discursive functions. One such function was that the speakers could distinguish themselves, the 'good immigrants' from the 'bad ones', who were accused of mechanically accepting a pre-made pattern for how to be an immigrant, and, even more importantly, of falsely claiming to be faced with structural racism in society. In the discourse of the female bloggers with immigrant or other ethnic minority background, furthermore, their ethnic and gendered identity constructions often intermingled (Studies II and III). These bloggers typically resisted the need for structural measures to enhance the position of immigrants and women in Swedish society with the argument that both gender equality and 'immigrant-friendliness' are already accomplished. The possibilities for women and minority members to 'make it' in society, it was implied, depend not upon structural factors, but on individual ones (cf. Holli, 2003; Magnusson, 2000). This discourse is an analogy of that of the female politicians (Study II) that positioned themselves in contrast to gender scholars, feminists and female political opponents, who were accused of not caring for immigrants and women, of being pretentious or having gotten it (= women's best interests) all wrong. Thus, favouring cultural assimilation and resisting structural measures to enhance the position of ethnic minorities and women are not stances confined to majority group members or men, but may indeed also be forwarded by ethnic minority group members and women themselves (cf. Verkuyten, 2005). This may, the present study suggests, be the case in a discursive context where the goal is to transmit a populist radical right or nationalist political message (illustrated in the example in Figure 2 below, from Study III; see also: Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b).

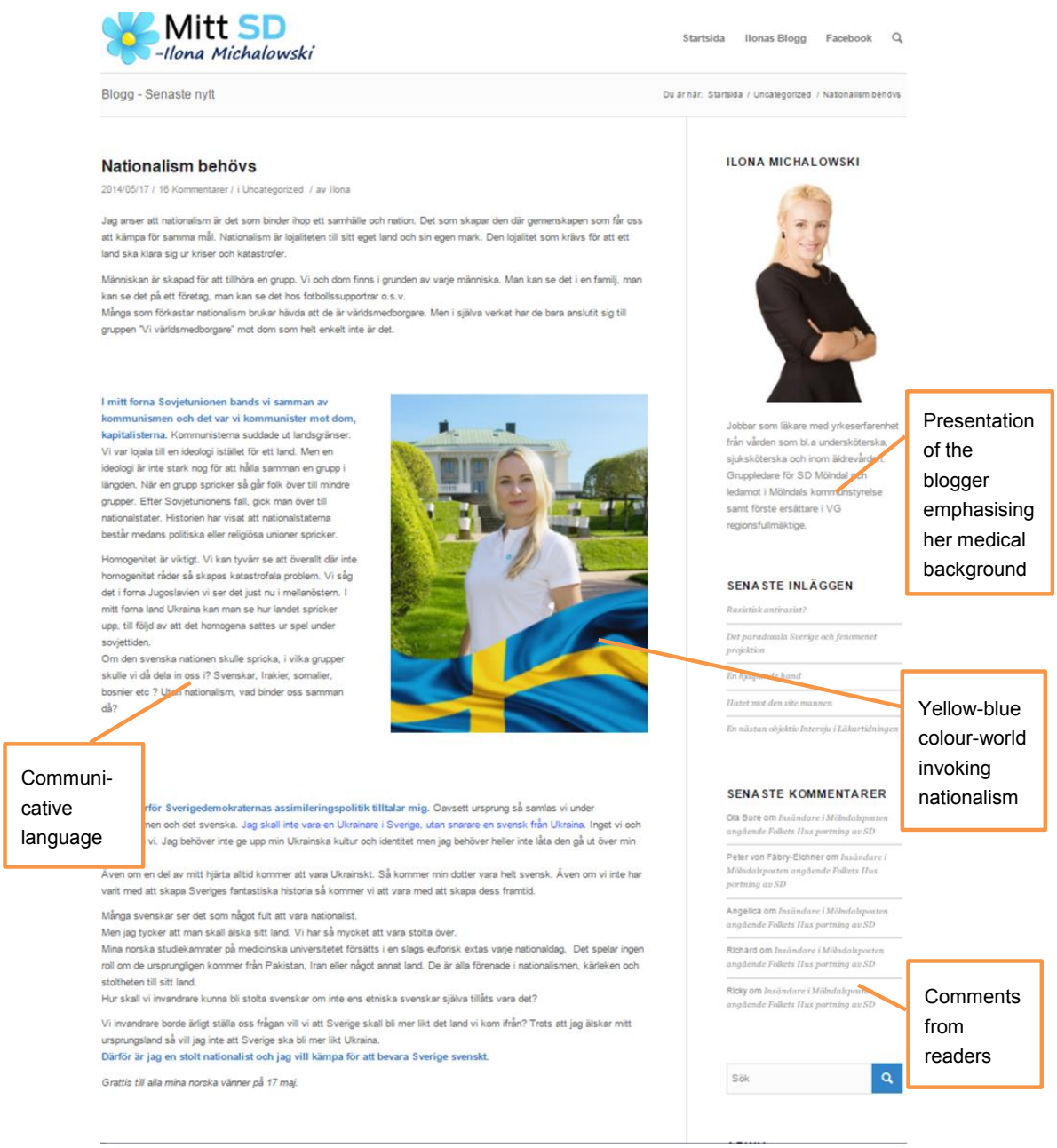

Figure 2 Pro-cultural assimilation and nationalist political blog-entry by female SD-politician of Ukrainian origin.

According to our analyses, assuming an immigrant or ethnic minority identity – even if it remained at a superficial level – allowed the populist radical right bloggers with immigrant or other ethnic minority background to construct subject positions of the racists, that is, political opponents, and the non-racists and the true victims of racism – the SD. To be precise, whilst denying the existence of structural racism in Swedish society, the bloggers drew upon their minority membership as well as their independent free will in order to accuse political opponents (and other immigrants) of discriminating against them because of the political choices they had made because they are immigrants. Such accusations not only reversed the racist label of the SD and attached it to their political opponents, but also remained faithful to the SD's anti-immigration political agenda. The bloggers and their discourse, concomitantly, served as 'proof' of the party having rid itself of its racist past. Again, a similar function was served by the discourse of the female politicians, who, in their proclamations of their parties as the only gender-equal ones that welcomed them into their ranks with open arms, asserted that these parties cannot be hostile to women and gender equality.

5.3 THE MULTIFACETED CHARACTER OF DISCOURSE CONTAINED IN POLITICAL BLOGS: MOVING BEYOND THE TEXT

As I hope to have demonstrated above, the present research into populist radical right political blogs shows that this discourse is very much akin to political discourse in other, more conventional settings like political speeches, and interviews and statements in traditional media. Self-defensive discursive strategies, such as the denial and reversal of racism (e.g., van Dijk, 1993a), the construction of common – internal and external – enemies (e.g., Wood & Finlay, 2008), culturally essentialist views about Islam (e.g., Verkuyten, 2013), extensive use of collective and nostalgic memories as discursive resources (e.g., Mols & Jetten, 2014; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b), self-positioning as a representative of the 'ordinary people' (e.g., Rapley, 1998), and use of notions of gender to demarcate boundaries between 'us and them' (e.g., Keskinen, 2013; Mulinari & Neergaard, 2014; Norocel, 2013; 2016) are well-documented features of populist and radical right political discourse. This notwithstanding, the present study is able to show that political blogs do provide politicians with unique tools for expressing political messages. In this section I shall argue, first, that the tools provided by the blogs are especially useful for politicians who wish to convey socially sensitive views, such as negative stances on immigration, immigrants and multiculturalism; and second, that any researcher who wishes to investigate political blogs needs to deploy an analytical approach that is able to grasp the multidimensional character of the discourse they contain.

Roughly, the blog-entries we studied can be positioned between the two extremes, of, on the one hand, those which were structured as traditional narratives with a clear beginning, middle and end, where the speaker him- or herself was dominant and the argumentation solid and concise; and on the other, those entries that lacked a coherent structure, and were instead built up as a conglomerate of verbal, intertextual, digital, (audio-)visual and communicative features. The blog-entries of the former kind relied on the use of classical discursive resources and rhetorical tools, whereas the latter kind also incorporated various non-verbal elements that the blogosphere offers. This division is by no means clear-cut; indeed the blog-entries were typically a mixture of both types. It is important to note that the different ways in which the blog-entries were structured may be the consequence of many factors, such as the particular formats of the blogs – some being more technologically advanced than others and thus allowing for more digital manoeuvring (cf. Giles et al., 2015) – as well as of the rhetorical preferences and skills of the individual blogger. Thus, it is not necessarily always the nature of the message that the politician wants to convey that determines the structure and form of the blog-entry, even though this may oftentimes be the case.

A central aspect that sets the blogs apart from other channels for conveying political messages is their structure, visual design and colour-world. The blogs we studied were often visually loaded with nationalist codes, such as blue-white colours in the Finnish ones (see Figure 1), and blue-yellow in the Swedish (Figure 2), symbolising the national flags of the two countries, respectively. In other cases, they appealed to nationalist sentiments in displaying pictures of places or buildings of national symbolic importance (Figure 3 below), serving to bring the readers together into a sense of imagined national community (Helmers & Hill, 2004, p. 4). It was common that the blogs featured an image of the blogger him- or herself, typically with his or her eyes directed towards the viewers, thus creating an imaginary relation of equality with them, and reinforcing a feeling of togetherness and mutual understanding (Figure 1; cf. Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

Like the verbal elements, also the visual components of the blogs could be 'read' at multiple levels, that is, at the concrete level of connotation, at the associative level of denotation and the ideological level of myth (Barthes, 1977). To take an example (Figure 3 below, from Study IV), in the context of a blog-entry that argued that multiculturalism is a threat to the nation, an image of a burning white candle in the midst of blackness (level of connotation) could be interpreted as symbolising the fading nation that will continue to burn if no action is taken to prevent this (level of denotation). At the final mythical level, the candle may represent the whiteness of the nation, and the surrounding darkness the threat of the intruding immigrant Other. There is nothing about a candle per se that symbolises immigration, or urgency and threat – indeed, these layers of meaning would have very different content in other argumentative contexts. Within political blogs, however, such visual elements can serve as important anchorages for the verbal messages, increasing their

persuasive power and steering the reader towards a meaning that the blogger has chosen in advance (Barthes, 1977, p. 40). With regards to conveying nationalist political messages, images and (audio-)visual material can, through their expressiveness, immediacy and symbolism, convey what it may be societally unacceptable for words to do (cf. Jewitt & Oyama, 2001).

Another strikingly common feature of the blogs we studied was the use of intertextuality and what I call *digital voicing* – the digital provision of external information-sources or voices of others that enhanced the factuality and credibility of the blogger's message (cf. Potter, 1996). Typically, this digital voicing was done through hyperlinking to external sources, such as carefully selected pieces of news, anti-immigration websites or other blogs. Oftentimes a blog-entry included not only the writings of the blogger him- or herself, but could be comprised of extensive quotes from others. These others were usually either persons who could appear as external and objective experts on a matter, or likeminded politicians who held a position of higher authority and could thus also be regarded as 'experts' in the eyes of an equally likeminded audience (cf. Potter's, 1996, notion of 'category entitlement'). Equally common was the use of strong or emotion-provoking audio-visual and visual material, such as documentary films about radical, violent Islamist groups, nostalgic music-videos about the 'past glory' of the nation, and pictures that displayed Muslim men in a depersonalised and threatening way. What all of these strategies accomplish is that the blogger can convey radical, immigration-hostile messages without actually saying anything him- or herself. Put differently, the use of such digital and audio-visual elements function as a self-protective discursive strategy of sorts: if the blogger does not take an explicit stance, he or she cannot lightly be accused of holding racist or prejudiced views. And were that to happen, the blogger is able to counter with the assertion that he or she merely provided 'evidence that speaks for itself'.

A further element that captures the particularity of political blogging is their collaborative and communicative character. Specifically, the bloggers in this study often phrased themselves through rhetorical questions for the readers to consider, enabling an implicit dialogue in which the content and meaning of the blog-entry became co-constructed together with the readers (Baumer et al., 2011). Commonly, a piece of emotion-evoking (audio-)visual material, or a quote in favour of multiculturalism by a political antagonist, would be preceded or followed by such a question. This functioned to leave the reader with the responsibility of drawing the conclusions of what was being implied, for instance, that the presented visual material captured or 'proved' the threat that multiculturalism entails for the nation, or that the pro-multiculturalism stance is detrimental. Communicating political messages in this way may not only enhances the credibility of the message in the eyes of the readers, but can also create a sense of connectedness between the blogging politician and the readers, who stand united against the conspiracy of immigrants and their protectors. Such populist 'we against them' identifications extend beyond the typical one-way communication within

more traditional forms of media (cf. Karlsson & Åström, 2014; Nilsson & Carlsson, 2014)[17].

[17] Unfortunately, it was beyond the scope of this dissertation to study also the reader-comments in the blogs, but this is certainly a topic of importance for future research to explore (cf. chapter 6.4 below).

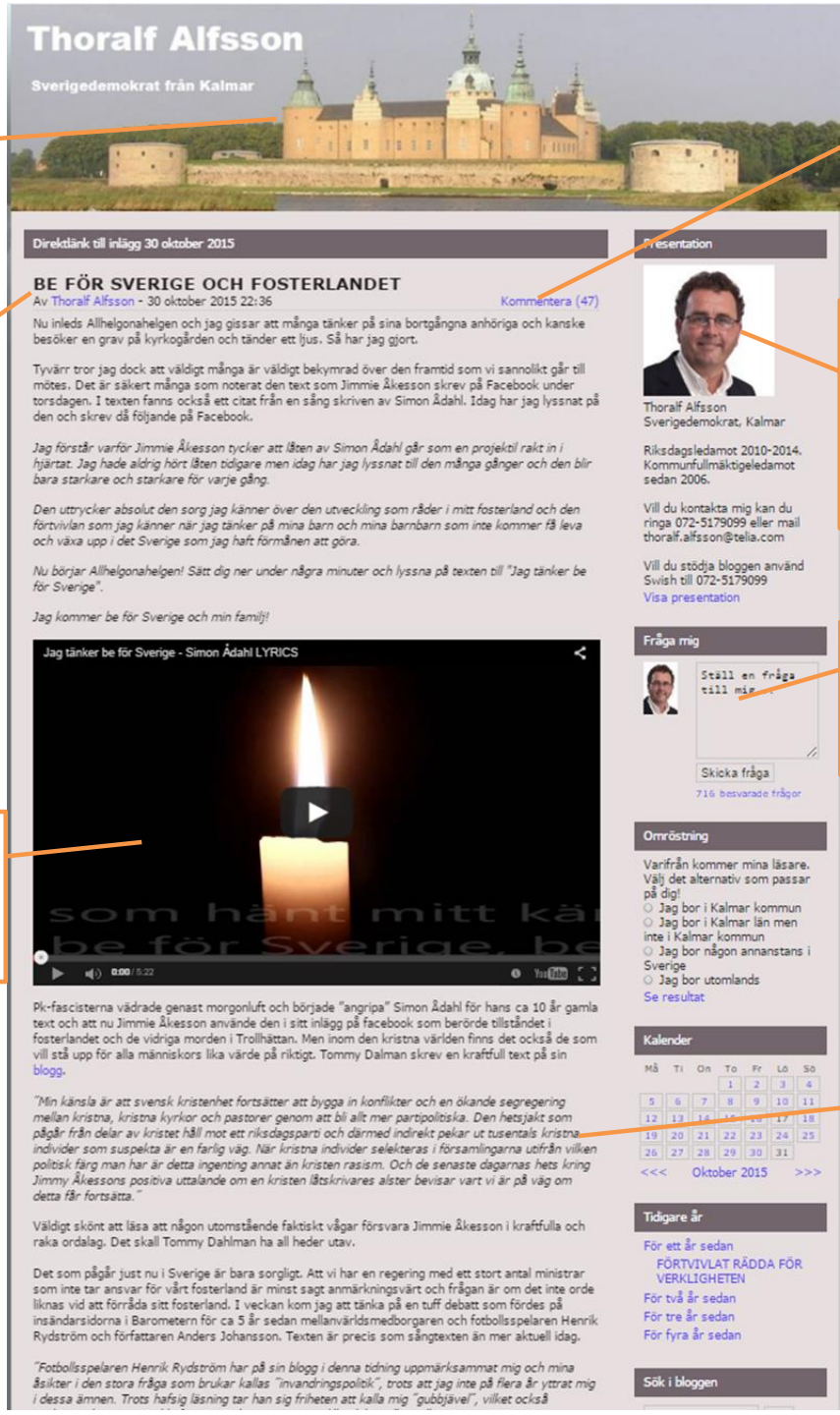

Image invoking nationalist connotations

Title addressing the readers

Audio-visual element adding meaning to the text

Possibility to comment on the entry

Blogger's gaze creating contact between himself and the viewers

Possibility to pose questions to the blogger

Quoting external 'expert'

Figure 3 Example of the use of audio-visual and digital elements in Swedish nationalist political blogging.

In order to study this multifaceted blog-discourse (Study IV), we adopted an analytical approach that followed the principles of critical discursive and rhetorical psychology, and also integrated analytical tools and concepts from the research fields of narrative psychology (e.g., Bruner, 1991; Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Greimas & Courtes, 1979), visual analysis and social semiotics (e.g., Barthes, 1977; Jewitt & Oyama; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; van Leeuwen, 2005) as well as from research on online political communication (e.g., Baumer et al., 2011; Nilsson & Carlsson, 2014; Silva, 2016). This combination of analytical perspectives was not only possible, but rather, I maintain, becomes necessary if one wants to grasp the multitude of elements contained in political blogs and analyse how these elements interact in the construction of a political message (but see sections 3.4 and 6.2 for reflections on the difficulties in combining these different approaches).

The critical discursive and rhetorical psychological analyses allowed us, first, to study the socially constructed and situated character and the rhetorical organisation of the blog-discourse. Second, acknowledging that the blog-entries were oftentimes conveyed in the form of emotion-appealing stories or narratives, similarly socially embedded (Bruner, 1991; Gergen & Gergen, 1988), the tools from the area of narrative psychology enabled us to scrutinise how the bloggers gave themselves the favoured position as the 'hero' of the story, as opposed to the countering (political) position of the 'villain' (Propp, 1968). Third, the analytical procedures of visual analyses and social semiotics made it possible to investigate the role that the (audio-)visual elements, such as pictures and videos, played in the transmission of the political message, or what 'hidden meanings' they could embody (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). Finally, insights from research into the collaborative construction of arguments (Baumer et al., 2011) and the use of hyperlinks in political blogs (Silva, 2016) permitted us to study the role that these elements played in the context of populist radical right and nationalist political blogging.

With the afore-described multi-methodological approach it was possible in detail to demonstrate how political blogs can efficiently be used for purposes of political communication and persuasion of exclusionary nationalist aims. It allowed for studying how various 'classical' rhetorical devices (Potter, 1996) and resources (Potter, 2012; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) interacted in intricate ways with narrative, digital, communicative and (audio-)visual elements in political blogs. The present research shows that these elements reinforced each other within the peculiar sphere of the blog that through its visual design and possibilities for blogger-reader interaction made the political messages unique in their form. It seems that – thanks to these features – rhetoric contained in the blogs of influential politicians need not be phrased in extreme and socially risky wordings in order to serve its purpose: to invite the readers to unite for an exclusionary nationalist political cause.

6 DISCUSSION

This study has explored exclusionary and gendered forms of nationalist discourse in Finnish and Swedish populist radical right political blogs. Radical right and nationalist political discourse is a timely topic, in society and academia alike. This dissertation has explored the ways in which social psychological phenomena of self-presentation, identity-constructions, discursive divisions between 'ingroups' and 'outgroups', persuasion, and appeals to emotions and nostalgic memories are implicated in the nationalist categories (cf. Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b) constructed within populist radical right political blogs. In so doing, the aim of this study has been twofold: on the one hand, it has been to show how social psychological research can contribute to our understanding of contemporary nationalist discourse, and on the other, it has been to contribute to social psychological research on nationalist political discourse with empirical, theoretical and methodological insights. In the present chapter I summarise and evaluate the results of the present study, and reflect upon its limitations in terms of its empirical context as well as methodology. Subsequently I discuss the ethical concerns involved in this study, after which I suggest directions for future research. I then elaborate upon the practical implications of the study and finish with some concluding remarks.

6.1 EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

Let us first turn to the central aim of this dissertation outlined in section 3.4 above: to explore how blogs may be used as tools for nationalist political communication and persuasion. As I hope to have demonstrated in the previous section, the way that blogs can efficiently serve this particular purpose is in their provision of digital and (audio-)visual elements that together with 'classical' rhetorical devices – or on their own – serve to increase the persuasive power and credibility of the blogger's message. They do so by allowing for the expression of derogatory and even racist arguments, whilst nevertheless protecting the blogger from accusations of spreading such arguments – the reason being that he or she has not needed to express a personal view on the matter at hand. The communicative character of the blog-discourse is equally pivotal: it enables the blogger to construct his or her message in an implicit, and oftentimes explicit, dialogue with the readers, which serves to increase a sense of mutual understanding between the blogger and the readership. In summary, these features entail that the blog-discourse becomes more than the sum of its parts: it creates an atmosphere of 'us, the people and true defenders of this nation' against 'them, the intruding or

deceptive national enemies'. This renders the blog a particularly fruitful tool for nationalist political communication and persuasion.

Turning then to the other, more specific research questions, the first of these was also an overarching one that sought an understanding of the potential social and political consequences of the discourse studied in this dissertation. The study set out to explore these implications or *functions* (cf. Edley, 2001) of the blog-discourse at two distinct, yet intertwined levels: at the immediate, argumentative one, as well as at the broader societal one. At the first level, the blog-discourse functioned to deny racist and misogynist views only to reverse them and attach them instead to the argumentative opponent, that is, to the bloggers' political antagonists, the 'so-called' anti-racists and feminists. Further, and in relation to the point above about political blogging, it created antagonistic relations between 'us', the victimised yet proud defenders of the nation, who speak on behalf of the people, and 'them', the national traitors who support immigrants and multiculturalism (Studies I and IV). At this level the blog discourse also functioned to create divisions between 'good' and 'bad' immigrants and feminists, which, moving away from the immediate argumentative context to the second, broader one, served to deny the existence of structural racism and discrimination of women in Finnish or Swedish societies; to argue against affirmative action for advancing the position of these groups; and to cleanse the bloggers' party's image of being racist or misogynist. The division between 'good' immigrants – those who have abandoned their culture, and the 'bad' ones – those who hold on to it, also served efficiently to promote a policy of assimilation and resist a multicultural society (Studies II and III). The bloggers' constructions of a binary opposition between 'bad' multiculturalism and 'good' ethnic and cultural homogeneity served, finally, to motivate why welfare provisions and the right to remain in the country should be the exclusive right of the narrowly defined, 'original and true' Finns or Swedes (and of culturally sufficiently similar or assimilated exceptions). In sum, the importance of the ways in which the politicians categorised *themselves* in order to express hostile views towards *others* reaffirms Reicher, Haslam and Rath's (2008) argument that in the production of outgroup hostility our definition of our ingroup is as central – perhaps even more central – than that of the outgroup.

Proceeding now to evaluate the findings of the present study in more detail, it is clear that its empirical setting – that of Finland and Sweden – limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the analyses of the blog discourse. The constructionist perspective I have adhered to conceives of discourse as inseparable from the social context within which it is embedded. Thus, even though the results indicate that many aspects of it indeed do have transnational character, the discourse explored here is first and foremost a reflection of the particular Finnish and Swedish contexts. In connection to this, one may rightfully ask why the context of Finland and Sweden was indeed chosen in the first place. What make results obtained in this setting

theoretically interesting for social scientific research on nationalist political discourse?

My answer to this question, which I have sought to discuss at length also in chapter 2 above, is twofold. First, as we have seen, Finland and Sweden deviate from previously studied country-contexts in terms of their strong norms of gender equality (e.g., Holli, 2003; Magnusson et al., 2008), their remarkable reliance on the social democratic welfare project that was initiated during a period of relative ethnic homogeneity (Finseraas, 2012), their short history of large-scale immigration, and, finally, their populations that are especially active users of social media (Karlsson & Åström, 2014; Strandberg, 2013) – a matter crucial for the electoral fortunes that the populist radical right only very recently, during the 21st century, managed to gain. Indeed, the fact that even Sweden – the ultimate cradle of social democracy, welfare and gender equality – now has witnessed the rise of a party that represents the radical right and is even widely regarded as racist seems to indicate that this can happen anywhere.

My study does show that Finnish and Swedish populist radical right politicians flexibly, and more or less ambivalently, use notions of gender equality as an argument in their exclusionary and gendered nationalist discourse (Studies I, II and III). This rhetorical strategy reveals something about the uniqueness of the Nordic context and its historical emphasis on and societal norms of gender equality: it is not politically credible to express anything but support for the notion. Yet, this very normativity and 'common-senseness' allows for different political actors to exploit it for their particular political purposes (cf. Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b). As we have seen, the FP and SD have managed, on the one hand, to position themselves as supporters and protectors of gender equality, and, on the other, to use it as a discursive resource for constructing antagonistic identities and draw boundaries between in- and outgroups (e.g., De los Reyes, Molina & Mulinari, 2003; Holli, 2003; Horsti, 2016; Keskinen, 2013; Mulinari & Neergaard, 2014; Tuori, 2007). The same holds true for the in the Nordic context equally 'sacred' notion of the welfare state, which the populist radical right politicians aimed to capitalise upon in their discourse (cf. e.g., Nordensvard & Ketola, 2014; Norocel, 2016; Pyrhönen, 2015). Nostalgic appeals to the 'forsaken welfare state', rather than to heroic victories of past national leaders (cf. Mols & Jetten, 2014), seem, despite the concept's association with the political left, to constitute a central component of the discourse in Finnish, and especially in Swedish populist radical right political blogs.

In the Swedish discourse the notion of the *folkhem*, the ultimate source of social welfare, bears a particularly strong connotation. Even though it was a central feature of the Finnish blogs as well, my analyses suggest that nostalgic appeals to the 19th century nation-building and to the endurance of the Finnish people in the wars against Russia were even more frequent here. In line with the findings of Nordensvard and Ketola (2014), these patterns seem to reflect Sweden's long history and position as the prime example of social

democratic welfare, as compared with Finland's relatively late adoption of this model. The Euroscepticism that Nordensvard and Ketola found in their study of the FP's welfare discourse was not a predominant theme in the present study. This, however, is likely to be a reflection of the disparate materials used in their study (official party documents, including an EU-programme), compared with the present one that has focused on political blogs out of which many are explicitly anti-immigration. Together, these findings emphasize that if we wish to unpack such powerful discursive resources – rooted in socially recognized meanings and memories – we must approach (nationalist) political discourse as part and parcel of its specific social, political and historical context.

This conclusion leads me to my second reason for choosing Finland and Sweden as the empirical context of this study: it allowed for a comparison between two countries that are culturally and politically very similar, yet in important aspects different from each other. The comparative approach was able to highlight the ways in which differences in immigration and asylum policies (Study I), in the developmental paths of the welfare state (Studies I and IV), in the societal emphases on gender equality and feminism (Study II), in the historical roots of the parties (Study I), and in the collective and nostalgic memories upon which nationalism is constructed (Studies I and IV) appear in the discourse of populist radical right politicians in the two countries. Study III lacked a comparative perspective for the simple and perhaps not all too surprising reason that I was not able to find any politicians within the FP that were of immigrant or other ethnic minority background and actively held a political blog. Rather than being a mere limitation of this study, however, this state of affairs also provides a reflection of the differences between the two countries and the implications of these differences for radical right politics: the SD, in struggling to wipe away their racist stain, and in acting in a country where the foreign-born population is considerably larger than in Finland, are both more devoted and able to attract members from this constituency.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned peculiarities of the Finnish-Swedish setting, the present study shows that nationalist, anti-immigration and radical right political discourse in the context of Finland and Sweden bears considerable similarity to that of radical right politicians in countries as diverse as Australia (e.g., Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Rapley, 1998), Austria (e.g., Wodak, 2011; Wodak & Richardson, 2013), France (e.g., Beauzamy, 2013; Mols & Jetten, 2014; Van der Valk, 2003), Germany (Posch, Stopfner, & Kienpointner, 2013), Hungary (e.g., Kovács & Szilágyi, 2013), Italy (e.g., Volpato, Durante, Gabbiadini, Andrighetto, & Mari, 2010), the Netherlands (e.g., Rooyakers & Verkuyten, 2012; Van Dijk, 1992; Verkuyten, 2013), Portugal (e.g., Marinho & Billig, 2013), and the UK (e.g., Atton, 2006; Finlay, 2007; Goodman & Johnson, 2014; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001b; Richardson & Colombo, 2014; Wood & Finlay, 2008). As we have seen (RQ 2, Study I), the three discursive constructions of Otherness – a deviant group of people, a

threatening ideology and an inner enemy – are familiar from studies on radical right discourse in these other country-contexts. However, in studying a large set of material from two countries, and in analytically exploring contemporary nationalist political discourse of Otherness in an encompassing way rather than focusing on particular features of it (e.g., *only* on notions of cultural essentialism, appeals to nostalgia, or positioning as 'ordinary people'), the present study is, I argue, able to give a uniquely broad view of the multifaceted character of this discourse. It also confirms – whether the parties wish to agree with this or not – that radical right discourse is in many ways transnational in nature.

In exploring the yet understudied topic of the worldview of women within populist radical right parties, my study has been able to show that the position of women in these parties is indeed characterized by tension and ambivalence between norms of feminism and gender equality, on the one hand, and a patriarchal politics, on the other (RQ 3, Study II). Based upon my findings, however, the level of this tension within the politicians' discourse seems very much to be a reflection of the degree to which surrounding societal norms of gender equality and feminism can compete with the populist radical right political ideology that is adversely disposed towards these very norms. Sweden can indeed, even more so than Finland, be considered an international forerunner in the promotion of gender equality and feminism. The ambivalent and nuanced Swedish versus the unanimously anti-feminist Finnish position seems to be a reflection of this: the SD women seemed ever conscious of the strong political norms of feminism that they have to negotiate their views against, whereas the FP did not (yet) have such feminist political pressures to tackle.

I found a further tension within the discourse of populist radical right politicians that were balancing between, on the one hand, an ethnic minority membership and, on the other, a political membership that is hostile to ethnic minorities (RQ 4, Study III). The varying and situational ways in which ethnic identities can be constructed has been demonstrated in previous studies conducted through group discussions or interviews in which identities are openly negotiated and 'offered' to the participants by the researcher (Merino & Tileagă, 2011; Sala, Dandy & Rapley, 2010; Verkuyten & de Wolf, 2002; Yamaguchi, 2005; cf. Potter & Hepburn, 2005). The fact that such variation occurred also in this study, within the individually written blog-entries by populist radical right politicians who were free to position themselves as they wished, sheds new light onto the malleable and flexible character of ethnic identities. As has been shown elsewhere (Verkuyten, 2005), arguments against affirmative action for and in favour of assimilation of ethnic minorities are not only presented by majority group members, but also, for an array of reasons, by ethnic minority group members themselves. The present study suggests that one such reason might be the context of transmitting a political message that refutes an ethnically diverse and multicultural society. Populist radical right politicians who also represent ethnic minority groups could,

alternatively, play the role of promoting the inclusion of various ethnic groups into a broader definition of national belonging (see Varjonen et al., 2013, for a study of the construction of a Finnish identity). My research findings indicate, however, that they have chosen a rather different path.

It may be that the discourse of the SD-politicians with ethnic minority membership reflects the politicians' membership in and identification with, not necessarily their *ethnic* ingroup, but their *political* one (cf. Reicher et al., 2008). Nevertheless, my findings do confirm Reicher and Hopkins' (2001b) argument that any constructions of 'us' versus 'them' in political rhetoric depend on the strategic organisation of the speaker's social – ethnic or other – identity constructions, and on the actions that these constructions aim to perform. Indeed, as discussed in section 5.2 above, the immigrants and ethnic minority members – as well as the women – whose discourse I studied went through extensive rhetorical work in their blogs in order to justify and defend their political decision to join a populist radical right party. Even though I am unable to say anything about these politicians' 'true' inner motives and political convictions, this finding suggests that this is indeed an issue that they cannot lightly dismiss, but one that they need to acknowledge in their (political) discourse. Further, this study discloses that the women, immigrants and ethnic minority members who join radical right parties serve as living proof that these parties – counter to their reputation – are open to and are in fact pursuing a policy that is friendly towards women and ethnic minorities. In this sense, these politicians play a significant role in enhancing the public appeal and persuasive power of their parties' politics. As Mitch Berbrier (2008) has concluded: 'Ethnicity and race are cultural tools – things used as resources in social action' (p. 586). The critical discursive analyses of the present study have been able to show that, in the case of populist radical right political discourse, ethnicity, race as well as gender can be used as resources that serve to further rather than counter gender and racial inequalities (Studies II and III).

In this study I have argued for a multidisciplinary approach to studying populist radical right political blogs, one which combines analytical procedures from critical discursive, rhetorical and narrative psychology with tools for studying the visual and digital features of the blogs (RQ 5, Study IV). This approach has enabled an exploration and demonstration of how the particular features of these blogs may be efficiently exploited for purposes of voter persuasion and mobilisation. Within political blogs, messages that construct antagonistic identities between 'us', the true people and patriots of this nation, and 'them' the intruders and traitors to it, are shaped not merely through cunning rhetoric, but also through a conglomerate of narrative, digital and (audio-)visual elements that contribute to the force of the message. The rhetorical strategy of active voicing (Potter, 1996), that is, the provision of external information-sources or voices of others that serve to enhance the sense of factuality and credibility of a message, so common in radical right and racist discourse, can in blogs be deployed by subtle digital means, such as

hyperlinking or presenting powerful imagery. This strategy of *digital voicing* is made possible by the unique character of Internet-based discourse: it does not, like 'offline' talk, disappear after it has been expressed, but remains stored and readily accessible for usage in future and to the original speaker perhaps unanticipated contexts (cf. Giles et al., 2015).

Furthermore, thanks to the potential of the blog to constitute a space for blogger-reader interaction the speaker can remain silent on sensitive matters and instead rhetorically leave the readers with the task of making judgements. Through these means the speaker may express radical and even racist views without actually saying anything him- or herself. Given the potential of such messages to reach beyond the blogosphere and into the midst of the public debate (see section 3.3), the potential of political blogs for voter persuasion and mobilisation must not be underestimated. My study thus provides firm support for the idea that social psychological research needs to move beyond the mere study of text if it wishes to grasp the multifaceted nature of contemporary political communication and persuasion (Study IV).

6.2 METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

A board on which qualitative researchers in general, and discursive researchers in particular, must balance, relates to the challenges involved in selecting material in a way that, on the one hand, is sufficiently narrow to allow for thorough discursive analyses, and on the other, sufficiently broad to provide analytical insights into the topic of study. Each of the four separate sub-studies in this dissertation was limited since the material utilised in them was unable to cover all aspects of the topics of anti-immigration discourse (Study I), the worldview of women (Study II) or immigrants or ethnic minority members (Study III) within populist radical right parties, or the distinctive features of nationalist political blogs (Study IV). The bloggers vary greatly in terms of how actively they post entries in their blogs, some writing at least one (often short) entry per day, whilst others write lengthy essay-like entries more seldom. Moreover, as the role of intertextuality, that is, of quoting and referring to other blogs, often to those of influential politicians, is such a common feature within the political blogosphere, some voices tend to gain more power than others. In the Finnish context this is most prominent in the case of Jussi Halla-aho, whose writings reappear in anti-immigration blogs as well as online discussion-fora, and whose influence and status within the anti-immigration community remains unmatched. It would not be fair to say that the material in this study reflects the individual bloggers' views completely equally. Nevertheless, a valuable feature of the present research project is that it was possible for us to select the material ourselves, abiding from the outset by the strict criteria mentioned in sections 4.1.1-4.1.4 above that we set in order to answer the research questions. Thus, the final selection of material is all but

arbitrary: it is the result of thoroughgoing work and considerations of the research endeavours.

The difficulty of finding adequate material at all was prominent in the case of Study III, where the research question itself caused challenges. The final set of material consisted of blogs of four politicians only two of whom had gone through an actual process of immigration themselves; where three out of four were women; and where no-one was a newcomer to Sweden (no-one had, for instance, arrived as a refugee or asylum-seeker in the 21st century). Thus, I cannot claim that the politicians whose discourse we examined reflect the view of the vast and heterogeneous group called 'immigrants' in everyday talk, nor that they represent the prototype of an 'unwanted' asylum-seeker that the SD wish to exclude from the nation. These are limiting and potentially distorting factors, which entail that the discourse examined in Study III is by no means representative of immigrants within the radical right in general. As we have seen, however, from a social psychological perspective all four politicians had an ethnic minority background that they oftentimes, and with no immediate provocation, did acknowledge in their identity constructions. As we have also seen, these constructions served important social and political functions, and are thus, I argue, nevertheless highly relevant concerns for critical social psychological researchers.

Within the field of discursive research, co-authoring bears with it specific constraints as well as affordances. Most importantly, division of labour at the stage of analysing the material means that the authors are not equally familiar with all parts of the material. Co-authoring also bears with it the risk of, on the one hand, the authors starting to converge too much in their interpretations, or, on the other, of disagreeing about them. Nevertheless, the studies presented here are a result of continuous and intense collaboration and discussion, in which we have critically examined and reflected upon our own and each other's interpretations, and thoroughly familiarised ourselves with the entire material. I am convinced that this exchange of critical viewpoints and ideas throughout the research process has been a great enrichment to this study.

The critical discursive and rhetorical psychological approach adopted in this study also bears with it constraints as well as affordances. First, I do not and cannot based on qualitative in-depth analysis of a limited set of material make claims of any broader generalisability of the discursive patterns I studied. Neither do I, given the constructionist and discursive psychological perspective I have adopted, assume that the discourse I studied is a reflection of the individual politicians 'true' attitudes, motives and goals, nor of any 'real' world that exists 'out there'. This is not to say that a more realist perspective would have been an inadequate way of approaching the present topic – it would simply have been a different one, with different goals. Rather than striving to generalise the results, to explore the inner cognitive world of the politicians, or to make claims about the degree of truthfulness of their arguments, this study has critically explored the discursive and rhetorical

patterns in depth (e.g., Weltman & Billig, 2001) and approached them as both functions and constructors of their surrounding societal, political and historical contexts (e.g., Edley, 2001; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001a).

Recognising that the discourse I studied is not representative of nationalist discourse at large does not, however, mean that some of its implications cannot be (Goodman, 2008). As we have seen, the construction of discursive boundaries between 'us' who belong to the nation and 'they' who do not, typically through cultural essentialist arguments and a concomitant denial of racism, is a rhetorical strategy used by radical right politicians for exclusionary nationalist purposes across temporal and geographical contexts. Indeed, as Simon Goodman (2008) notes, it may be that discursive psychologists could and should begin to talk about the potential of their findings to have a certain kind of generalisability: in so far as discourse is constituted of systems of meaning (e.g., Potter & Wetherell, 1987) that may persist across time and space, and in so far as it is seen as action-oriented (cf. Edwards & Potter, 1992), the goals that certain systems of meaning aim to – and often do – accomplish may indeed have a general character. This suggestion, in turn, can serve as an encouragement for critics of exclusionary nationalist discourse that seek to promote a discourse whose goals are the opposite. It also opens up the prospect of moving away from the traditional quantitative-generalizable and qualitative-non-generalizable dichotomy, and towards talking about different sorts of generalisability instead.

My choices in terms of methodology and analytical procedures engender further thoroughgoing reflections and concerns. In Study IV the main analytical approaches of critical discursive and rhetorical psychology were accompanied by analytical procedures from social semiotic and rhetorical studies of images. Within this field, the cognitive aspects of visual communication are not necessarily disregarded or discarded; rather, researchers may be interested in, for example, the cognitive resources we use in the construction and interpretation of visual images (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001), and in the ways that visual communication may affect viewers' attitudes and emotions (Blair, 2004). Yet, despite these theoretical disparities, I argue that since the different approaches share an emphasis on how meanings are constructed in verbal, visual and digital discourse, and on what functions such constructions can have, it is both possible and commendable to unite them in a *critical* study of political (blog) discourse (cf. Edley, 2001; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001).

I was from the outset attracted by the approaches of critical discursive and rhetorical psychology in terms of their emphasis on the socially embedded and functional character as well as the argumentative and dilemmatic nature of discourse – foci that I found especially important for purposefully studying the character and functions of nationalist political discourse. Alternative ways of approaching the topic of political discourse would have been to do so from a discourse historical (e.g., Reisigl & Wodak, 2015) or critical discourse analytical perspective, as for example that advocated by Norman and Isabela

Fairclough (e.g., Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012), as discussed in section 3.4 above. These perspectives do in my view share central emphases with critical discursive psychology: all acknowledge the socially constructed and historically situated character of discourse, and pay attention to its rhetorical organisation. Indeed, in conducting this study, I repeatedly found myself struggling to disseminate the precise epistemological differences between the perspectives, and to fathom the reasons for the shortage of communication between their adherents. A critical discursive psychological exploration of the way that the speaking subject discursively positions him- or herself in relation to others (e.g., Edley, 2001) is, I argue, very much akin to the way that a narrative researcher may disseminate the hero and the villain of a story (Propp, 1968; cf. e.g., László, Ehmann, Péley & Pólya, 2002), how the rhetorical psychologist explores speakers' arguments and counter-arguments (e.g., Billig, 1987), or how the critical discourse analyst investigates the use of claims and counter-claims in political rhetoric (e.g., Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012). Thus, despite the advantages of different discourse analytical disciplines maintaining their own specific affordances, I share Martha Augoustinos' (2013) concern about the disadvantages of building too strict boundaries between them.[18] It seems to me that adherents of all the separate domains, given their substantial overlap in terms of research interests and epistemological stances, could benefit rather than lose from intensified discussion and exchange. This could, ultimately, significantly enrich critical social scientific research into political communication and persuasion.

6.3 ETHICAL CONCERNS

In this study I have scrutinized the blog-writings of individual politicians and made explicit their names. Similar to Facebook users who do not necessarily share researchers' views on what constitutes 'public' versus 'private' communication (cf. Gleibs, 2014), it is most probable that the bloggers have not written their accounts with the intention of providing material for critical academic research. An ethical question I have therefore been grappling with is whether or not to contact the politicians in advance in order to ask for their consent to study their writings. I did, however, choose not to do so. This is because my material derives from the politicians' official political blogs that anyone may access and use for any purpose they like; and because the bloggers are influential politicians – not vulnerable groups who I run the risk of harming with my research (cf. Association of Internet Researchers, 2012).

Also the methodological concerns discussed in section 6.2 above bear with them ethical ones. When conducting critical discursive research it is the

[18] Similar concerns have been expressed by Margaret Wetherell, who in her 1998 study develops an analytical approach that integrates fine-grained, conversation analytical and post-structuralist, more genealogical perspectives on discourse.

researcher's duty to remain critical of him- or herself as well. In my case this has entailed reflecting upon my own subjectivity in relation to the topic I study. As a Finnish woman, holding a university degree and belonging to the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland that the FP remains hostile towards (Jungar & Jupskås, 2014), these personal experiences and beliefs provide that I am no neutral observer of the topic of nationalist political discourse. My own ideological dilemma during this research journey has involved maintaining a critical analytical approach, yet continuously and determinedly avoiding to succumb to contemptuous judgement and bias of the discourse I study. At the end of all things I am, nevertheless, unable to remove my own subjectivity and the ways that it influences my research. This means that my interpretation of the discourse I have studied is only one possibility – it is my construction of others' constructions. Yet, through constant self-reflection; by rigorously adhering to the analytical procedures of the research perspectives that I have applied; and by disclosing these analytical steps in detail, I have strived towards maximal transparency of my research. Moreover, the collaboration and discussions with my co-authors mentioned in section 6.2 above, as well as the valuable comments I have received from social psychologists and other social and political scientists, increase my confidence about the results of this study. It is my hope, therefore, that my interpretation remains useful rather than arbitrary – for social psychological research and in terms of societal relevance as well.

6.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study's focus on political blogs has spawned multiple queries to be further explored in future research. As I have sought to emphasize, a central feature in terms of the social psychological dynamics involved in political blogging is its communicative and collaborative nature (Baumer et al., 2011; cf. chapters 3.3 and 5.3): oftentimes the readers are able to directly comment upon the politician's blog-entry, and engage in a discussion with him or her as well as amongst each other. Exactly how such discussion-threads evolve, for instance, how consistency and variability (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) occur in this discourse, and how the discussion unfolds in terms of topics and turn-taking (e.g., Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 2007) would be challenging yet fascinating topics for discursive psychologists and conversation analysts to explore (cf. Giles et al., 2015).

This leads me to a further related reflection. An actor that is central for the construction and re(production) of an exclusionary nation and that, in Goffman's (1981) terms, is neither physically present nor imagined, is the audience. Even though I have sought to elaborate on how the bloggers engage in discursive and rhetorical work in order to increase the attraction and credibility of their messages, my analyses are unable to determine the extent to which they have been successful or not in their endeavour to appeal to their

readerships. Future studies might indeed investigate this issue, for example by analysing discussion-threads that blog-entries engender in online fora, or by studying the afore-mentioned comment-sections in the blogs themselves. For the present moment, my conclusions about the rhetorical force of the blog-discourse, our awareness of its reincarnation in other media (e.g., Farrell & Drezner, 2008), and its irreplaceable role in explaining the triumphal march of the populist radical right in Finland and Sweden (e.g., Horsti, 2015), must suffice as indications of its success in this regard.

Moving forward, the present study has necessarily been limited in its empirical focus on the blog-writings of Finnish and Swedish populist radical right politicians. Indeed, Europe has witnessed not only a new wave of radical right-wing populist parties, but also of left-wing populists who have gained electoral fortunes in countries such as Spain and Greece. An interesting avenue for future research would be to compare the discourse of the populist right with the populist left. How might these oppositional parties, in terms of positioning on the political spectrum, differ from or resemble each other in the ways that they use, for example, appeals to socially recognized and nostalgic memories in their discourse?

On the other hand, it would have been interesting indeed to include also the two Scandinavian countries of Denmark and Norway in this study, as these countries as well have witnessed the rise of populist radical right parties in the 21st century. It would be fascinating to compare, for example, how the discourse of the four Nordic populist radical right parties might vary as a function of whether or not they are (as in Finland and Norway) or are not (as in Sweden and Denmark) in government position, that is, whether or not they are forced to balance between their populist anti-elite mission on the one hand, and their own position within that very elite, on the other. This must remain a task for future research, however, since my knowledge of Danish and Norwegian is limited, and as it would have been beyond the scope of this doctoral research project to conduct thorough discursive analyses on as broad a data-corpus as such an endeavour would have required.

I set out on this study in the beginning of 2014, when neither the SD nor the FP were in government position, and when the 'refugee crisis' was yet to come. At this time, these two parties were the loudest proclaimers of exclusionary nationalist policies in their respective countries. Since then, however, it seems that the so-called established parties in both countries have – be it for reasons of political conviction or strategy – began to follow suit. May the following examples serve as brief illustrations of this development. In early 2016 the Swedish Social Democratic Prime Minister described his government's turn towards a harsher asylum policy in 2015 as a reaction to the former 'disastrous' policy of the EU and the conservative parties who sought to 'erode the Swedish welfare model' (Magnusson, 2016). His Finnish colleague, in turn, dismissed accusations that his government's asylum policy breached constitutional and human rights law with statements that the policy is 'working just fine' (Junkkari, 2016), and that it is warranted by the fact that

it is in line with that of Sweden (Lydén, 2016). Let us note that this was not an argument the Finnish Prime Minister put forward in the time when Sweden's asylum policy was liberal.

We can also extend our examples beyond the Nordic context and look at France, where the presidential elections of 2017 were assumed to become a combat between the radical right Marine Le Pen and the conservative ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy. In September 2016, the latter candidate, desperate to gain the trust of the anti-immigration voters of the former, declared on Twitter: 'In France, there is only one community: the French community that consists of one language, one culture and one way of life' (Sarkozy, 2016). These examples illuminate that it is certainly necessary not to assume that populism and exclusionary nationalism are phenomena confined to the radical right. As discussed in chapter 2.1, populism is not something that one is, but something that one does. How it is done in the discourse of parties across the political spectrum, including amongst those in the very highest positions of power, and what potentially detrimental societal implications this discourse can have, is an urgent topic for social and political psychological research.

6.5 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study has shown how exclusionary and gendered nationalist political appeals can be conveyed through political blogs in ways that allow the individual politicians to appear as non-prejudiced, liberal and as acting on behalf of 'the people'. It has shown that the way these appeals are constructed are reflections of the 'digital age' in which they are embedded: politicians efficiently use social media along with their digital affordances for the sake of convincing potential voters of their own political aims. Yet, as this and other critical discourse studies have shown (e.g., Beauzamy, 2013; Musolff, 2011; Richardson, 2013; Wodak, 2009) racist views also remain couched in rhetorical formulations and metaphors that have a long history in racist speech. This entails a double challenge for those who wish to unpack and remain critical of nationalist and racist policies in the 21st century. On the one hand, we must be wary of the 'new' digital and audio-visual elements in which these policies are concealed and through which they are transmitted. On the other hand, however, it would be detrimental to believe that we have 'learned from the past' and could today lightly see through political rhetoric such as that of the Nazis in the 20th century. This is something to be especially aware of in contemporary Europe that has shown its weakness in terms of withering inter-state solidarity – not least in managing the large influx of asylum-seekers in 2015 – but that still has a chance to hinder radical right and nationalist movements to dictate who is and who is not entitled to a life of dignity and human rights.

A troubling contemporary trend seems to be that the long-lasting and powerful taboos against prejudice are partially and slowly, yet certainly, being

replaced with taboos against accusations of prejudice and racism (cf. Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Goodman, 2008). There is a danger here that the definition of racism grows so narrow that no (discursive or non-discursive) act fits into it. Concomitantly, online discussion fora – including commentaries in political blogs – flourish with anonymous articulations of hate. In order to counter this problem, that is, in order to be able to adequately intervene in racism and hate-speech, decision-makers must ensure that the monitoring of and legislation concerning the online space is continuously developed. As users and consumers of online media, we should all do our utmost to maintain a border between freedom of speech and hate-speech also in this public sphere, and to identify occurrences of the latter in rhetorical disguise of the former.

A central outcome of this study is indeed that critical reading of political discourse should not remain the interest of social and political scientists alone. As contemporary political discourse is rapidly transmitted and circulated through a multitude of media channels – new and traditional – it is a challenge for any reader to disseminate where what seem to be 'facts' actually derive from; what is being simplified in the discourse; and what is being left unsaid. Journalists are in a crucial position in terms of how they collect, critically interpret and quote the information they acquire from, for example, political blogs. A newly coined website of the French newspaper *Libération* provides an excellent example of such an initiative: it aims to scrutinize extreme propaganda, from left to right, and to provide counter-arguments and statistical evidence that refutes false claims (Tollgerdt, 2016).

Finally, young people are active users of the Internet and social media, and therefore it is of utmost importance that they learn to critically evaluate the sources from which they acquire information and in which they are offered attractive and seemingly solid political arguments. Schools, universities and other educational contexts provide a key and fruitful forum for developing critical reading at a young age.

6.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This doctoral dissertation has aimed to demonstrate the rhetorically powerful and in many aspects peculiar character of exclusionary and gendered forms of nationalist discourse contained in political blogs. It has done so by combining critical discursive and rhetorical psychological as well as narrative studies of text with analyses of the digital and (audio-)visual elements that make the messages contained in political blogs unique in their content and form. The findings indicate that nationalist political blogging can function efficiently to (re)produce gender and racial inequalities, and to persuade presumptive supporters of political aims that do so. Thanks to the particular features that blogs provide this can be done without the individual politician having to express personal views that render him or her liable to accusations of misogyny, prejudice or racism. In light of these findings, the present study

confirms that we must be cautious in our view of social media, including the blogosphere, as purely beneficial to democratic causes (cf. Loader & Mercea, 2011).

The bloggers who have been the focus of this study are politicians with significant authority: the discourse they engage in in their blogs continues to circulate in and influence the broader public debates. That is, through their discourse, these politicians exert substantial power in determining who does and who does not belong in a society. This dissertation has demonstrated that even though it may claim to aim for the opposite, such discourse can function to foment radicalisation, societal tensions and instability, and to create an atmosphere where extreme groups feel encouraged and empowered. This holds true not only for the two countries studied here, but indeed for all of Europe, where nationalism is showing its face in a way we have not witnessed since 1945. The challenge to the media, politicians and civil activists alike remains in not endorsing and adapting a rhetoric that provides empty promises and seemingly simple solutions to complex issues; that promotes an exclusionary idea of the nation; and that necessitates an antagonistic division between 'us, the worthy' and 'them, the less worthy'. Instead, if we are to maintain a Europe of solidarity and diversity we must provide convincing and sustainable alternatives to this rhetoric. Critically unpacking the arguments it rests on may give us something to embark from on our way towards this goal.

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